

THE
OLD COMMODORE.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "RATTLIN THE REEFER," &c.

"N'ESIROQUE!"

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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THE OLD COMMODORE.

VOL. I.



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CHAPTER I.

“ For the bullets and the gout
Have so knocked his hull about,
That he'll never more be fit for sea.”

OLD SONG.

“ ZOUNDS ! ”

“ You have begun your history with an oath ! ” ejaculates the purist.

“ You have begun it with a vulgarism,” lisps the young gentleman, who has a horror of being thought vulgar.

And, alas ! I myself confess that I have commenced it with a plagiarism. I am sorry,

truly sorry, that, by this confession, I have forestalled the discovery with three-and-twenty critics, who were all gaping, open-mouthed, to charge me with the crime. 'Tis a vile plagiarism, certainly; for I must plead guilty to the knowledge of seven novels, be they of volumes more or less, three tales, two romances, thirteen plays, and one sermon, beginning precisely in the same manner—to say nothing of its being an invidious piracy from the commonplaces of the day; for, does not every husband, when, conscious of much wine, he comes home late, and meets the scowling brow of the soother of his soul, and views the gathering remonstrance trembling on her lip, like a bee hanging with its sting in the rosebud,—does he not, I say, arrest it ere it fall, with the altisonant, Zounds! and, after this happy commencement of *his* chapter, has he not all the words and sentences that follow, *his* own way, as I intend to have in mine?

And yet, I have a little to say in defence of

this boisterous “Zounds!” I can assure the pietist that, notwithstanding its etymological derivation from the awful and right royal outbreak of “God’s wounds,” that it is not an oath : and, in the sense he will hereafter find it used, it is nothing more than a pain-relieving expletive, guilty of no more impiety than its more modest and querulous brothers, “Ah me !” “Alas !” and “Lack-a-daisy !”

And I can assure the young gentleman with the gilt spurs, and mosaic gold chains, that, inflated as it is, it is by no means vulgar ; for it was used, with astounding emphasis, by the first gentleman of the age, and the first sovereign of Europe, his late majesty, upon a dirty little boy, who, when in search of the twopenny postman, and stumbling upon royalty, in the Windsor uniform, and alone, had thrust a penny in the regal palm, with a crumpled letter.

“Zounds !” said the possessor of the lives and

fortunes of so many loyal Britons, "Zounds! boy, whom do you take me for?"

There is not a more loyal man in his majesty's dominions than myself; so do not expect that I shall be guilty of *lèse majesté* in recording the innocent and very ignorant answer. I have only related so much of the anecdote as is necessary to my purpose, to prove that the word, *per se*, is *not* vulgar.

That, at the beginning of a book or chapter it is a plagiarism, I again acknowledge; but surely the readers of novels will pardon me—for I assure them, if they strain at this word, they will be precisely in the situation of Rabelais' giant, who could swallow, digest, and thrive upon windmills, yet was choked by endeavouring to bolt a pound of butter, near the mouth of a heated oven. Surely those who are in the habit of devouring, greedily, dished-up plagiarisms, in the shape of sentences, paragraphs, plots, and chapters, ought

not to make wry mouths at a single pirated word.

“Zounds!”

This thunder-mocking word was ejected, almost at the loudest pitch of the human voice, in a large and lofty room of a splendid mansion, near Trestletree, in the county of Herts. This apartment had nothing to distinguish it from the generality of those of an estated English gentleman, at the close of the last century; with the exception that it contained many pictures, all relating to nautical matters, and the portraits of Howe, Duncan, Benbow, and most of the worthies who have built up the proud monument of England's naval glory. There was also, amongst the other furniture, and in a place of honour, a superb model of a ninety-eight, with a commodore's broad pendant attached to the main royal head, and several specimens of Indian weapons of war were resting in the corners of the room.

Now, this apartment opened, by the means

of a glass door, upon a carefully kept lawn, decorated with large and oval beds of roses; and the fragrance of many flowers from well-filled stands, containing vase upon vase, made the air near the door balmy and odoriferous, and almost overcame the aroma of tobacco, that was too distinctly perceivable within.

At the moment that the terrific interjection, with which I have commenced this veracious history, was launched forth, this apartment, the lawn drawing-room, as it was called, was occupied by four persons, with whom I wish my readers to be most familiarly acquainted. Let us retrospect for one single moment; for, after the explosion of the terrible word, all was confusion and disarray.

Observe attentively that stout, broad-built old gentleman, with his back to the light; mark his high and bald forehead: the structure is ample and noble; but its pure and marble brightness is disfigured by a deep red seam, which, if you will trace it from the apex

of his head to his left temple, you will find to terminate in a closely adhering black patch, that covers the socket where once had been the eye. But though the forehead, up to the crown, is bald, there is a profusion of wiry and iron-grey curling hair about the temples and the back of the head, which terminates in an immensely thick but not long queue, rather clumsily tied together with black ribbon. The features have once undoubtedly been particularly handsome; but they are now a good deal wrinkled, and discoloured with many tints, some of which, I confess with shame and sorrow, are the signs of, at least, occasional intemperance. His remaining eye is clear, black, large, and fierce, and the dark and S like eyebrow, which has been crooked out of its natural curve by many years of habitual frowning, and constantly peering through a spy-glass, gives that region of his face a look that we might almost call terrible. The mouth is large, with fine teeth; but the lower part of

the face is decidedly sensual. At this moment, the expression of his countenance is not dignified, it is peevish, almost old-womanly, and shows indubitable signs of ill-health.

But to continue with our description of this, to us, all-important personage. You perceive, now that he has moved rather restlessly on his chair, that he has lost his left hand, but that he has ingeniously supplied the deficiency by terminating his arm with a short and strong iron spike, which spike is furnished on one of its sides by a hook, also of iron, and on the other by a tobacco-stopper, made either of bone or ivory, but it is so much used, and so dirty, it is impossible to say which. You will also find, when this gentleman stands up, that he is rather short for his breadth, yet is still a tall man. In his dress, excepting that it is rather carelessly put on, and seems totally unacquainted with the brush, he has nothing remarkable, unless a very thin and small stock of black silk round his neck might be

thought so, at a time when gentlemen usually wore abundant cravats of well-starched white muslin.

He is an invalid ; for see, notwithstanding the heat of the day, it being but a little past noon, he has one of his feet cushioned, and swaddled with flannel, whilst a padded crutch reclines against the table, within his reach. He is evidently in an ill-humour, though there is an untouched decanter of Madeira wine before him, and a nearly emptied tumbler of cold strong rum-and-water, under his very nose. He is smoking a common clay pipe furiously, and every now and then ramming home the tobacco-ashes with the stopper on his spiked arm. This person is the Commodore: and, being nearly sixty, people are generally beginning to call him "the Old Commodore." He is also the eldest male branch and the representative of his family, and one of the richest men in the county, and, had he chosen to have exerted those energies

that he always displayed when afloat, he might have been the most influential.

He was born the eighth son, and during his already lengthened life had seen all his brothers die childless before him. I have not before mentioned that he was a baronet, because he attached so little importance to the title, principally because he had attained it by inheritance and by the loss of so many dear relatives, and not by the grace of his sovereign for services on that unstable battle-field, the ocean. He had distinguished himself, though court favour had not condescended to distinguish him. For this there was a stringent reason, with which the readers will hereafter become acquainted. Indeed, it was evident that he was annoyed when particularly addressed as Sir Octavius Bacuissart; for "*Commodore*," pronounced excessively short, was the appellation in which he most rejoiced.

As far removed from the Commodore as the nature of the apartment would permit, sate his

maiden sister, Miss Matilda Bacuissart, a beauty, but something more than a matured—a fading one. She was slight, delicate, and forty-five—and all her existence was now occupied, and every power of her somewhat limited mind employed, in a constant struggle with that stern old conqueror Time—in which the old scythe-bearer was, if not daily, monthly getting the better, notwithstanding every assistance that the *coiffeuse* and the *modiste* so superabundantly furnished. Notwithstanding the two—it might have been three—faint and horizontal lines that traversed her forehead, and which you could only see in a favourable light for the exercise of vision, and an unfavourable one for the lady, and the rather lengthened shape that the dimple in each cheek was gradually assuming, she was still a very loveable creature, with the most delicate yet healthy complexion, and with a smile literally enchanting.

She was entrenched behind her work-table,

which was well provided with various essences, in order that the atmosphere immediately around her might not be impregnated with the vulgar odours exhaling so voluminously from her brother's equally vulgar-looking pipe. I need scarcely say, that she was busy with some of those little arts that tend to the embellishment of female beauty. It may be asked, why, on a hot summer's noon, she submitted herself to the annoyance of a tobacco-pipe, when there were so many splendid apartments totally unoccupied in Trestletree-hall. The answer will not be very panegyrical on my hero. She was ordered to remain where she was, and Matilda was one of those gentle beings, who seem born to meet and to disarm the tyranny of man, and to turn his oppression into love, by the softness of their manners, and the kindness of their hearts.

Exactly opposite the Commodore was placed, at the long table before mentioned, a slightly

made, though tall, and decidedly gentlemanly, middle-aged person, of a most pleasing physiognomy, that would have been eminently handsome had not his face been a little too long, and the expression of which been wanting in that firmness that we always look for in the male countenance. Surrounded by various papers, he was writing as furiously as the Baronet was smoking ; but, instead of the dogged look of ill-temper of his opposite, he evidently betrayed marks of trepidation, as the rapid and stolen glances that he threw along the table sufficiently proved.

This gentleman was one of the oldest, and, in the hour of need, had proved one of the truest friends of the surly Commadore particularly, and of his family generally, though he never had obtained official rank beyond that of captain's clerk. True it is, that he might have had, years before, through the interest of his friend, obtained the rank of purser, but that did not at all seem to suit his views ; and, it must

be confessed, that, at the period of which we are writing, pursers were by no means, generally, the gentlemanly fellows they now are.

Ever since the Commodore had been posted, Mr. Underdown, the name of this gentleman, had sailed with him as his friend and secretary, but latterly never permitted his name to be borne on the ship's books; and he acted thus, because, as being a civilian, it afforded him the only means of resistance when his patron grew too tempestuous. "Sir, I will leave you," always produced on the Commodore an instantaneous calm, a tremulous shake of the hand, and a murmuring, "Harry Underdown, you never can be so ungenerous."

But the most important personage of this strangely constituted party is yet to be described. She was the tyrant of the domain, extensive as it was, the embroiler of all around, the personification of an omnipotent will. The ingenious tactics and the mild philosophy of temper of Mr. Underdown, could form no bar-

rier to the onward rush of her impulses : is it then to be wondered at, that the ever gentle and passive Miss Matilda was merely the instrument of her wishes ? But then the rough, old, singular Commodore, with his rock-like temper, his constitutional irritability, and the explosions of his gunpowder anger ; had not he, with all this mighty train of awe-inspiring attributes, the privilege of commanding, or the power to coerce ?—alas ! he had not.

The reader is expecting that, when I describe this important personage, rather a haughty Medea shall stand before him or her—dignity enthroned upon her brow, resolve upon her lips, and the undying and unswerving light of destiny in her eye—or, should the ancient classical image not be the first that offers to his mind, he will fancy, at least, he is to behold some witch-like crone, who, with the family secret in one hand, and a broomstick in the other, is to order everything about her as she lists ; a second Meg Merrilies, without her claim either

to natural dignity or to supernatural inspiration. But the tyrant of Trestletree-hall resembled neither of these—nor yet was she a termagant old harridan, privileged by expected thousands to be eminently disagreeable. Dear reader, she was only a little girl of between fifteen and sixteen years of age, “sole hope and heiress of his line and house,” meaning, of course, the line and house of Sir Octavius Bacuissart.

With a figure that poets assign to a sylph, with a countenance half Hebe, half angel, eyes now flashing like the coruscations of the northern lights, and now swimming in all the dewy purity of nascent sensibility, she had no name more euphonious than Rebecca, which was usually shortened into that of Becky, and not unfrequently was she called, with vulgar alliteration, Becky Backy.

What Miss Rebecca Bacuissart thought of herself, it would be difficult to say ; but everyone else who knew her had no difficulty in

pronouncing her a beautiful plague—a splendid vexation—a something, at once to be feared, admired, and loved. She had been dismissed from three boarding-schools for high spirits; had fought with, scratched, and bitten, twice that number of private governesses, and had, at the time of which we are speaking, fully gained the crowning victory. She had arrayed her own indomitable self-will against what was, till then, supposed to be the indomitable self-will of her father, and she had conquered.

We must confess that they were not well matched; the obstinacy of each was equal; but the odds in the struggle were greatly against the Commodore, on account of her excessive beauty, and of his extreme love; he had fought for the supremacy manfully, but, finding himself totally over-matched, he had submitted, and, as he never did things by halves, his submission was complete.

Notwithstanding her rounded limbs and

swelling neck threw an air of winning and graceful mockery over her child-like habiliments, and notwithstanding all the persuasions of her aunt Matilda, Rebecca, though verging on sixteen, would not, as yet, suffer herself to be dressed as a woman. As she had long lost her ravenous appetite for bread-and-butter, and exchanged the redness of her little hands, that used always to be covered with chilblains in the winter, for a velvety softness and purity of colour that were exquisite, I can only account for her obstinacy, as to dress, by the known horror that she always had of everything that looked like art, or deception. She rebelled against all artificial arrangement of her hair, and stoutly stood up against stays.

At this very moment that the Commodore is smoking, and drinking his abominable mixture of rum-and-water, Miss Rebecca is kneeling down behind him, her white muslin dress nearly enveloped with a brown-holland pinafore, her

ample, glossy, and deeply-tinted chestnut hair hanging half down her back in all the wavy exuberance of nature. Unperceived by the Commodore who is smoking,—by Mr. Underdown, who is writing,—and her aunt, the quiet Matilda, who is working,—she has divested her taper though unconfined waist of its long and broad red sash, and is sedulously employed in converting it into a set of splendid harness for that huge, and, just now, not very placidly-looking tabby cat. What next? Smoke on, old Commodore; fate kindly hides from you the coming pang that will almost shatter your being.

As I am a faithful historian, this wicked Rebecca of ours has got her aunt's cross and ever-scolding parrot, in its unwieldy, gilded cage, and, notwithstanding all the protests that the feathered biped is making by crying out, "Bad Becky! bad Becky!" she is fastening his cupola-shaped domicile, like a Juggernaut, to the rebellious Master Tom. The operation

is complete. She now gives the cat a wicked blow with one of her father's crutches, exclaiming, "Take a morning drive, pretty Polly,"—and away they go, cat, parrot, and cage, directly over the gout-inflamed limb of the tortured Commodore, the talons of the angry Grimalkin penetrating through all the bandages.

The cat, maddened with fright, thrice encircles the room, and the parrot, whirled along violently at her tail, shrieks out discordant horror. At the end of the third circumgyration, the feline steed rushes through the glass-window that opened on the lawn, but the cage being too large to pass through the framed square, the glass of which is smashed, the screaming parrot is left in the drawing-room, whilst the cat, supposing itself to be hunted by a feathered monster, with the ribbon streaming behind her, seeks for safety in the deep shades of the shrubberies.

As this newly-invented equipage flew round

the room, its mischievous inventor was convulsed with laughter. Mr. Underdown's hair stood on end with terror; Miss Matilda went off quietly and in a most lady-like manner into a gentle swoon; and the Commodore, dashing the pipe, with its burning contents, from his mouth, shivering into a hundred pieces along the table, stood bolt upright, for a space, in speechless agony; at length, when the cat was fairly off, and the man of much pain had found the use of his tongue, he exploded with that dreadful monosyllable with which I have begun, and with which I now finish this chapter —“Zounds!”

CHAPTER II.

“ An ancient and irascible old man,
Who would not feed his angry heart with love,
And yet could never hate.”—OLD PLAY.

“ ZOUNDS !” Consider, reader, could the Commodore, under all those afflicting circumstances, have said less ? But the intensity of his rage was far more terrible in his countenance, than in the unearthly roar of his voice. He seized the remaining crutch that his daughter had not appropriated for a whip, and, swinging it with his right hand over his head, was about to hurl it at the prostrate cage and the yelling parrot ; but his spoilt daughter sprang forward like a beautiful Amazon, and, placing

her face of flushed loveliness almost in contact, and in complete contrast, to the parental and infuriated ugliness, she firmly, with both her hands, held his muscular wrist.

“ You sha’n’t, father, I say you sha’n’t hurt a feather of my aunt’s bird ; you sha’n’t, I say, you sha’n’t—you *shall* not ! ”—and she stamped violently with her little vixen feet.

For one instant the iron substitute for the old sailor’s hand, with its terrible spike and hook, vibrated hideously over the beauteous and curl-adorned head of his daughter. But she looked him fully and unflinchingly in his face, and exclaimed, “ Strike me ! I dare you ! What ! would you kill me, as you did Augustus, you wicked old man, you ? I tell you this to your frightful old face, that you had better make the first blow you give me my death-blow ; for, if your hand ever falls upon me in anger, if I have strength enough left after it, I’ll drag myself to the nearest pond, and drown myself : do you hear that ?—drown,

drown—drown ! Then who, in this wide world, will you have to love you, you very passionate old man, when Augustus is drowned, and Rebecca is drowned too ?”

“ ‘This is too dreadful,’ moaned the suffering father, as he sank, almost in a state of collapse, into his chair. “ Go, Rebecca,” said he, immediately after, in the mildest tone possible ; “ go to your aunt, for see, she has fainted.”

The spoilt and undutiful daughter seemed changed, as if by miracle, into the loving and obedient niece—her arms were immediately about Matilda’s neck, and two warm and passionate kisses upon her brow ; but, though Rebecca showed much love, she showed but little alarm—her aunt often fainted, and had a peculiar tact for timely revivals. She was soon so far recovered as to be able to replace the cage in its proper place, and to succeed in soothing the bird, all angry as he was in being so lately made to play the part, in

spite of his beak (having no teeth,) of the charioteer.

But while this was proceeding with the ladies, Sir Octavius had not been idle. The pangs of his outraged limb now grew doubly severe. He scowled around him for an object on which to vent his tortured feelings. Unfortunately for his character, that object was before him in the person of the mild and unoffending Mr. Underdown. Terrified by the voice of the Commodore, he hastily gathered up the papers over which he had been employed, contemplating a hasty retreat to the safety of his own room. He was on the point of passing the threshold, when the Commodore thundered forth,—

“Stop, you less than a man!—at least *you* shall not despise me—*you* shall not treat me like a wayward child—*you* shall not come and go into my presence as you list—*you* who eat of my bread ——”

What further he would have said it is im-

possible to conjecture, for, again the tyrant of his house interposed, who, coming briskly forward, placed her hand upon his mouth, and though impudently yet energetically exclaimed—"For shame, father!—not another word against dear, good Mister Underdown. O father! you know that he has led you through the world like a wild lion in leading-strings—he has saved you from death three times—from dishonour he has saved you! O my father!—you, you have told me this—he is a good man—do you understand that, a good, *good* man?"

"A poor, trembling, timorous, nervous, ——" spluttered out the Commodore, as well as he could get the words through the fingers of his daughter that were still pressed over his lips.

"Trembling!—timorous!" said the indignant girl: "who, very passionate father of mine, who, I ask you, was it, when our lodging-house in Bath was one mass of fire, rushed through the furnace when you were bed-ridden with

that gout, and bore you out through the flames, where, had it not been for him, you would have been baked into a worthless cinder? Was there any man among the surrounding thousands that dared even to attempt to do this?"

"Yes," said the obdurate Commodore, getting a little breath for a few minutes; "but who was it, Miss Becky, that the very moment he got me into a place of safety, first fell a-crying like a woman, and then fairly fainted away with fright—who was it but that valiant hero of yours—the whimpering Mister Underdown?"

"My dear, sweet young lady," said the mild man, gently interposing.

"Hold your tongue, deary—hold your tongue, or I'll stop your mouth with kisses;"—then turning to her father, the little virago, taking the attitude of a tragedy queen, thus proceeded: "Do you imagine, sir, that I will suffer the best friend I have in the world to be ill-treated

under the roof that will one day be mine? He is the only true friend that I have—without him, what should I have been, with that wicked temper that you have given me; the little that I know, do I not owe all to his love? If I sometimes tremble to do wrong, and fear the name of God, it proceeds from his teaching; and he has also taught me another and a bitter lesson—to love you.”

“ Bitter ! O my child ! ”

“ Bitter ! yes, bitter ; what do you do to make anybody love you ? you can hardly keep your countenance for pain.”

“ Your fault—you huzzy—your fault.”

“ And has not nice Dr. Ginningham expressly forbid you to drink that filthy rum-and-water, and ordered you to take that agreeable mixture every hour? and here, instead of taking ten cupfuls of pleasant physic, you have taken just as many glasses of grog.”

“ D—n the physic, d—n the doctor, and d—n everything an inch and a half high ! Oh !

oh! oh! am I, after having conquered in forty battles, to be twitted by a child—my own daughter too?”

“Conquer yourself, my esteemed friend,” said Mr. Underdown, in the most amiable of all voices.

“You’ll drive me mad,” roared out the badgered Commodore. “Hold your milky tongue, you preaching, psalm-singing, knee-crooking, bible-thumping son of a——”

Again was the delicate hand of Rebecca placed over that volcano of fiery words, the Commodore’s mouth.

“I have told you, once for all, father, that I will not have good Mr. Underdown abused under *my* roof. Here we are, doing all we can to love you, and make you a good, dutiful, obedient parent, and you won’t let us.”

“Pray, miss,” said the baronet, a convulsive play of drollery, in spite of the twinges in his foot, appearing about the muscles of his mouth; “pray, miss, if an *uninterested* per-

son like myself may make so extremely bold as to ask you a question, may I entreat to know how old you are?"

"Shall be sixteen, sir, next January," said she, very demurely dropping her interrogator a curtsey.

"And pray, miss, encouraged by your condescension, may I still further presume to ask, if you have a father, or any natural protector?"

"A good, dear, brave, noble father, when he is not——"

"For God's sake!" said Mr. Underdown, fairly catching her in his arms, "do not finish the sentence."

"O Becky," said the fast-yielding Commodore, "my foot, foot."

"Run, Underdown, run for the liniment directly;" and Rebecca was on her knees before him in an instant.

When the good soul again made his appearance at the threshold, with the application

in his hand, he did not enter the room, but gently closed the door, and retired; for he perceived the disobedient daughter still kneeling at her father's feet, his head bending over her drooping figure, and his arms lying fondly upon her shoulders, and the murmuring of mingled blessings and sobbings came to his ears, like the music we fancy from above.

Thus ended the adventure of the cat and the parrot; which will tend to prove what an ill-regulated house was that which Sir Octavius dreamt that he governed. We have here shown the old Commodore in that obfuscation of a dotage with which he was always afflicted on shore. We shall get him afloat directly, and then, amidst the tempest, either of the battle or the elements, you will hardly recognise the Sir Octavius who was in the habit of muddling himself in the morning with filthy grog and tobacco, and permitting himself to be browbeaten by his own child.

It was now five years since last he had had

a command: and those five years of inactivity had done more to destroy his constitution and his temper than all the illness and all the hardships he had hitherto undergone—and no man had ever bravely made head against more. He had, however, been so agitated by his disease, the wilfulness and the ill-regulated affection of his daughter, that, in order to lose himself, notwithstanding the injunctions of Dr. Gunningham, he had set in to hard drinking, with as much perseverance as a November rain, when the wind is at east; so, at about half-past three on the same afternoon, when the first dinner-bell had rung—for, at that period, they always dined at four o'clock—the members of this beautifully conducted family were thus disposed of: the Commodore was fast asleep in the chair that he had occupied all the morning, in a happy, but rather inglorious state of insensibility, either to the petulance of his daughter, or the tortures of his disease. Miss Matilda was already full-dressed, look-

ing very delicate, very beautiful, and, the least possible, not young; Rebecca was assisting at the hunting of a water-rat in one of the ponds of her father's park, with the helpers and the boys of the stables, her hair flying wildly off her shoulders to the wind, her satin shoes saturated with water, and pinafore dabbled with mud; whilst her nervous Mentor, Mr. Underdown, book in hand, was skipping here and there beside her, humbly, yet most urgently, entreating her to forbear a recreation so little suited to her sex, her station, and, he was pleased also to say, the gentleness of her heart.

At length, either through shame of the act, or love for the person who reprobated it so earnestly, she desisted from her amusement, and, placing her arm affectionately within his, walked up to the mansion, attentively listening to the moral instructions that he assiduously poured into her ears.

When the dinner was announced, the Com-

modore was just fit to go to bed, and to bed he went accordingly ; so the niece, aunt, and Mr. Underdown placed themselves at the well-furnished table, expressing but little regret at the absence of the master of the family ; for the occurrence was too common to excite much attention. The evening was spent, as usual, partly in outbreaks of violence from Miss Rebecca, partly in her gratefully taking lessons of gentleness and conduct from her aunt, and in imbibing lessons still more valuable from timid yet enlightened Mr. Underdown. Thus was passed one day at Trestletree Hall, the seat of the fighting old Commodore, Sir Octavius Ba-
cuissart : and this day was a fair sample of many, or the most of them, that winged their lazy flight over this beautiful residence.

CHAPTER III.

“ Be good ; but in thy vanity ask not
Of heaven to prove thy worth, by sending woes.”

OLD PLAY

SIR Octavius, notwithstanding his large and unencumbered estates, and his high reputation for maritime skill, and for bravery the most chivalrous, was pre-eminently an unhappy man. Among the many glorious actions that he had achieved, there stood forward a few dark deeds, that, in his mind, threw either a gloom over his honours, or, according to the then state of his feelings, tinged them with a gory hue. How soon does satisfaction pall upon the acts that glorify us ! as years pass

on, they are too often either remembered with disgust, or they fade away from our memory for ever. But the great wickedness that we have done is thought over with frenzied eagerness, and never fades in the remembrance, but exists with an undying vividness : accompanying us in the solitary walk by day, and is seen at night directing the horrible pageants of the troubled dream. It thus lives eternally, and can only be destroyed by the continuous commission of greater crimes. This is a beneficial arrangement of Providence ; whilst there is remorse, there is hope for the sinner. This perdurable contrition sometimes exists for acts that have been infinitely more pernicious in their consequences than the perpetrator of them had intended : and then, the barb of anguish for a dark and never-forgotten deed is usually sharpened by love or the purer affections of the soul. Such was the case with the old Commodore.

I am not going to give a detailed biography

of our eccentric hero, nor to recount in which of his seventy actions he had lost his eye, or in what ship he had had his left arm blown away. Indeed, the body of the Commodore was seamed all over with scars, and yet he called himself a fortunate man in action. I shall relate only so much of his life as is connected with our present matter-of-fact story.

At the period that our narrative commenced, Sir Octavius had three sisters living. The reader has already been introduced to one of them, in the person of Miss Matilda Bacuisart, or, more properly speaking, Miss Bacuisart, as she was, though the youngest, the only spinster amongst them. Ostensibly, she kept house for the Commodore; but, as keeping house is generally understood to be keeping the house in order, or order in the house, the good lady was relieved from all trouble of the sort; for Miss Rebecca took care that disorder should reign paramount through every apartment in the mansion, from the cellars to the

attics, with the exception of one little room, which was appropriated to the privacy and the books of Mr. Underdown.

The next sister in age was a Mrs. Oliphant, a widow, a very pretty one, very plump, and very happy, notwithstanding that all the Ba-
cuissarts said that she had disgraced herself by marrying a very rich wholesale grocer, of the Minories. The raisins and figs that he had patronised rewarded him, for he died worth a plum. The widow was now about forty-two, with a rather numerous family, the males of which, with one exception, had taken to commerce, with great assiduity, whilst the ladies had taken themselves to the different watering-places with an assiduity equal to that of their brothers, in hopes that they themselves might speedily be taken to be mistresses of excellent establishments. The eldest son was now a post-captain in the navy, and in command of the frigate, *Monina*, though scarcely six-and-twenty years of age.

Though the rest of the family were rather shy of the sugared Oliphants, the young captain was somewhat a favourite with the old Commodore, though the former always took care to give him as wide a berth as possible. This testimony of unbounded respect was rather ungrateful on the part of Captain Oliphant, seeing that it was mainly through the interest of his uncle that he was made post with such post-haste. Certainly, the Commodore had not been proverbial for good-humour, or even good-nature, for the last five or six years: and thus, though there was a lovely girl and an heiress within his doors, it is true that, as yet, the young post-captain had appeared more to admire the outside architecture of Trestletree Hall, than the beauty, the embellishments, and the comforts it contained.

But the Commodore's eldest sister, of whom we are now to speak, had been a superior, and was now an extraordinary, woman. Some said she was mad; but her maligners could not

even dream of the wonderful conformation of her mind. From her youth upwards she had been an enthusiast, but an enthusiast only in her love for the beautiful and the just. If ever a being loved virtue for its exceeding loveliness, it was Lady Astell. She had accustomed herself to say of every subject, "Is it strictly and purely right? if so, it must be pleasant, and very beautiful." No one ever reproached her for having used a harsh word, or of having bestowed a disdainful look; yet, in her pertinacity of keeping in what her conscience told her was the right course, she was immovable. If she had a fault, it was, perhaps, in the pride of that perfection of soul-discipline, to which she conceived that she had attained.

Once, when, perhaps, a little too much inflated with the self-complacency of rectitude, she gently reprov'd a querulous companion. "My dear Isabelle," said she, "is not this continual repining sinful? Strive better to regulate your wishes and your aspirations.

For myself, I am at peace with God and man."

Though this was not said in a pharisaical spirit, but with the best intention, the iron of the reproach entered the heart of the re-proved one, and thus she gave vent to her resentment.

"You, Agnes Bacuissart—you boast of being at peace with God and with man!—and well you may be; but wait ye, till the evil hour come—wait, till afflictions rush on and press down that self-gratulating spirit into the dust. No wonder that the heiress and the beauty, the courted, the flattered, and the spoiled one, should be at peace with God and with man. *You* have not been tried—you have not been wooed, and when you have given your heart, seen it flung aside with contempt; you have not been tried—you have not been tried;" and then, bursting into tears, her agitated friend would not be comforted, but departed, and in anger.

Before Agnes Bacuissart laid her head upon her pillow that night, she began to think that she was not quite so righteous as she had hitherto supposed herself to be, and then committed another sin. Forgetting that divine and love-inspired petition, taught us by the Saviour, "Lead us not into temptation," she asked in her prayer, ere she slept, for trials—to be led into temptation. The daring request was fearfully, was woefully granted.

The very next day, her favoured tutor dropped on his knees before her, and declared himself the victim of a maddening, a destroying passion. And then her conscience rose up and smote her: and, as she faltered out the too gentle "Nay," she wept. But, upon the whole, she behaved nobly: for whilst she gradually destroyed all hope in the bosom of her humble suitor, she gave his feelings an object, and one connected with the desponding affection, that he swore could never be eradicated.

She contrived, in the first place, without

permitting him to do more than suspect from what hand the boon came, to place him above want; and then, for her sake, he promised to watch over the safety and moderate the violence of her youngest and best-loved brother, our friend the Commodore, then a wild and dissolute lieutenant in the navy, and who was, just at that time, making himself a little too notorious by his dissipations in the different seaport towns. Well did the discarded yet esteemed lover redeem his pledge: he never left the Commodore, he is with him still. Need I say that it is the quiet Mr. Underdown.

But the working out of Agnes' prayer had been but begun. In the course of three short years, she saw her family afflicted with what was called the degrading match of her second sister to Mr. Oliphant. She was too sensible to feel this as a trial in itself; but it fell sorely upon the spirits of her proud relations, and through them on her. Then came the icy hand of death, and rapid was the work of his

destroying fingers. In the short space of three years, she saw seven loved brothers borne in succession to the grave, leaving the honours of the house to be supported by a wild and, she feared, dissolute young seaman. She then began to liken herself unto Job, and went about doing good more earnestly, and endeavouring to conquer the anguish of her own woes in relieving those of others.

When her grief was green, and the worm had scarcely made his first loathsome meal upon her seventh brother, the Isabelle of whom we have just spoken, now a happy wife, called upon the afflicted one. When she, in her turn, seeing the traces of tears upon her pale cheeks, spoke to the bereaved one of the sinfulness of repining, she answered mildly, and even lovingly, to her reprover, "My dear Isabelle, natural grief I confess I feel, and despite this wasted form and these hollow eyes, believe me, I repine not; I am still at peace with God and man."

But, notwithstanding the strength of Miss Bacuissart's well-regulated mind, every one who saw her well understood that her body was fast perishing: and, notwithstanding her piety and resignation, it would have perished, had not a being every way worthy of her come and poured forth into her heart the balm of consolation from the lips of love. In due time, she married Lord Astell, a younger son of an English earl, and, though a younger son, he brought to their union a fortune nearly equal to her own.

Agnes had before known happiness, it was now her fortunate lot to experience bliss. If before she had been sorely tempted by sorrows, she was now more strongly tempted by joys; but still she forgot neither God nor man. Veiling her passionate enthusiasm for the right and the beautiful under the dignity of a matronly calmness, she moved in her sphere blest and blessing. But the dark book of her

trials was not yet closed ; she had not even glanced at the last dreadful page. Lord Astell, after four years of happiness, too great, perhaps, for the good of the human heart, died suddenly.

Did the frantic widow again say, in the first wild burst of her grief, “ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord ? ” We know not ; but she secluded herself for days, and weeks, and months, and ate only sufficient to nourish her grief ; for her corporeal frame was fast dying.

There was no ostentation in her woe ; she did not hang the apartment she never left with gloomy drapery, nor did she, though the light of hope was not in her bosom, exclude, peevishly, the light of the day. But few cared or dared to intrude upon her, and she was left almost totally alone. People would stand by her, and she would scarcely notice them. When the Isabelle of former days now approached her

gently, and with her heart bleeding for her, and with grief-smothered voice bid her be comforted and weep no more, the crushed one could only moan out, "He was so good!" and then weep afresh.

This could not last, nor would it have lasted long had not relief been near. Agnes had now become so weak as to feel the removal from the sofa on which she constantly lay throughout the day to be irksome to her. She loved the resting-place of that sofa with a morbid affection, for on it her husband had died. The evening was fast closing and persons were in her room, yet she regarded them not; they approached her, they hung over her, yet she noticed not their steps, for her face was buried in the pillow.

At length a violent shivering manifested itself over her whole frame, as she uttered wildly, "Mercy, mercy, Lord God! Cause me to die. Oh! take me to him."

But a hand was laid heavily on her shoulder,

and an old familiar voice, clear, mild, and pure, addressed her in these words :

“ Lady Astell, look up and do your duty.”

She looked not up, but trembled excessively, and replied, “ Who calls? Is it a voice from heaven ?”

But the same sweet tones answered her, though a little more tremulously,—

“ It is the call of the scriptures upon the believer in Christ; it is the call of the child upon its mother; sacred calls, that may not be resisted.”

And then she heard a sobbing, but a very little voice that clove her heart in twain, and it said, “ Mamma, kiss poor Augustus once more: he is not naughty now.”

Lady Astell, as if electrified, sprang upright, and shaking wildly her neglected and clustering hair from before her eyes, she almost shrieked out, “ Let me see him, let me see him !” and then frantically catching him in her arms, she could only utter, “ My child ! my child ! my child !”

at first rapidly and loudly, but gradually in a softer tone as the soothings of peace came over her bosom, till, in time, the endearing words were scarcely audible, and the words themselves at length died away as in a peaceful slumber; for the mother's head again fell back upon the pillow with Augustus in her arms, and she slept the first happy sleep of many weary days and weeping nights.

The affectionate little fellow, though hardly more than three years of age, with the intuition of love, gave way, as it were, into the feelings of the mother; and when the stranger left the room, they were both sleeping lovingly in each other's arms.

As Mr. Underdown was sitting at his solitary meal, about nine o'clock that evening, his surprise was as great as his satisfaction at seeing Lady Astell enter the room, leading her son by the hand. There was a sustained dignity in her step, and a sweet composure in her countenance, that told of the mind's rebellion conquered.

Her hair was no longer dishevelled, nor her dress marked by tokens of neglect. It is true, there was on her lips no smile as she approached her former lover with extended hands, but there were the sweet words of welcome, and the mild light of gratitude was in her eye. She thanked him long and ardently for having awaked her from a torpor, which she called a sinful sleeping of selfishness on the part that Providence had ordained to her. She inquired minutely of the well-doing of her brother, the post-captain, now already famous in the naval annals of his country for his daring enterprise and his many victories.

Mr. Underdown told her that the day before, the *Una*—the frigate *Sir Octavius* then commanded—had arrived at Portsmouth from the West Indies; that, on reading the letters awaiting him, he had sent for him, and with a great agitation that he vainly endeavoured to suppress, he began swearing at the female sex, and then exclaimed abruptly, in his uncouth phrase-

ology, "Here's the devil to pay, and no pitch hot! Astell has lost the number of his mess, and Agnes is making a fool of herself. She must not be so soft as to slip her wind; go and see what you can do for her:—out of my line entirely, d'ye see, or I'd go myself. I need not say that, with as much speed as money and horses could command, I am here."

She again thanked him; and at his entreaty drank the half of a glass of wine, and shortly after bade him good night, telling him to fear for her no more, for that she found already that she had sufficient strength to do her duty as a parent.

The next evening Mr. Underdown rejoined Sir Octavius, and re-assured him of the safety of his sister. A few days afterwards, Underdown received a letter from his agent, acquainting him that, from an unknown hand, there had been made a considerable increase to his life annuity.

From the day of her old tutor's visit, Lady

Astell rallied wonderfully in mind and body : she became active and very cheerful, and though she could not altogether dismiss her regrets, she was, in time, again comparatively happy.

As it never was my intention to write her life, I shall not record the successful means she took to make her high-spirited and blooming son as virtuous and as benevolent as herself.

. Before this time, about the period when Augustus had entered in his second year, the Commodore had snatched a moment from his busy life to marry. But it is not only a post-captain that is skilful at snatching. There is that great body-snatcher, Death, that will always take precedence ; and to prove his superiority, after just barely permitting Lady Bacuissart to bring Rebecca into the world, he suddenly snatched away the mother.

The Commodore thought himself a very ill-used man, and behaved like one. He called Death a cowardly, skulking rascal to sneak into a lady's chamber where he was not at all wanted,

and there to do his cruelty upon the young and beautiful, and yet show a deal of false delicacy as to whom he should walk off with when broadsides were pouring in of round and grape. He swore he could not understand it; and, as he really loved his poor little wife devotedly, he, being in harbour at the time, moped for the first fortnight in soberness and melancholy, and made himself continuously drunk for the second, and thus he conquered his grief and gained another argument in favour of his beloved grog.

We are now approaching to that period of the Commodore's life, in which remorse had begun to overshadow his feelings. Hitherto, he had been a most successful man; that he had lost his left arm, had his forehead cloven in twain, and the sight of one of his eyes extinguished, he regarded as matters of course, trifles not worth speaking of; he had been thanked by both Houses of Parliament for his intrepidity, had received the King and Queen on board after a victorious action, and, though a furious Whig,

had been highly flattered by the Tory administration. In addition to all this, he had lately always a separate command, and never left port without hoisting his broad pendant as Commodore. As he was by no means of expensive habits, the value of his estates was fast increasing, and he was just so much on shore as to make himself distractedly fond of his beautiful daughter Rebecca, and to leave the most positive and superlative orders that she should be permitted to spoil herself after her own fashion. We have already seen with what exactitude he had been obeyed.

When Rebecca was about ten years of age, and Augustus nearly thirteen, and the young lady had dismissed all her governesses and masters, satisfied that she was perfectly educated, a strict intimacy and a most unbounded confidence existed between the young couple. This lasted for three years, until Augustus was sixteen, and was much encouraged by Lady Astell. She liked the young hoyden for her

real good qualities, for the frankness of her disposition, and for her beauty ; and she did all that she could to remedy the defects of what the young lady herself was pleased to call her education. To Lady Astell, Rebecca was always tractable, and she would do and learn anything to please cousin Augustus ; and though of the other sex, he was, in most things, a beautiful model by which to form her character. These three years had almost made a lady of Rebecca, and at the short intervals that the Commodore's duty permitted him to spend ashore, he was enraptured at the improvement his daughter made, encouraged to the utmost the growing attachment of the cousins, and always called them the little man and wife.

Lady Astell, who was the next youngest born to the Commodore, had, notwithstanding the roughness of his exterior and his numerous excesses, always loved him with an unbounded affection, and, as much as her scrupulous conscience would permit, preferred him in her heart,

and against her judgment, to all her brothers and sisters. But now that he was the only fraternal tie that death had left her, she clung to him the more fondly, the more tenaciously. She also looked forward to the union of their children as the consummation of her earthly happiness.

The admiration, the worship of the till now untrained Rebecca for her handsome and gentle Augustus was a beautiful thing to contemplate. He was a very fair youth, with a womanly delicacy of complexion, a fine colour, and had all his late father's aristocratic features formed upon the Grecian model. He loved his cousin with all that depth of feeling that only a mind inured to reflection possesses ; yes, he loved her tenderly, but, as yet, without passion. In order to induce her to do anything distasteful, and, to her, restraint was the most distasteful of all things, Augustus had but to say, "For my sake," and it was done. To see them together was like viewing the angel of happiness leading

forth and directing the steps of a spirit of young joy.

And though the person of young Astell appeared so perfect, the holy and the unremitting instructions of his mother had made his mind still more admirable: it was, indeed, overflowing with all high aspirations and goodwill to all men. He had learned of his mother to love the right in all things for its intrinsic beauty. The frivolous might have thought him too composed for a youth not yet sixteen, but his sweet laugh of joy, though never loud, was almost ecstasy to behold; and, at the relation of any noble deed, you would behold his colour mount high, even unto his temples, and his eyes flash as if they beheld something beyond this world. But, with all this outward placidity, he possessed a fixity of purpose and an intensity of resolve which, though never called into action but on great occasions, nothing could overcome. He was a youth of many affections, and of but one enmity; and

that was a deadly one—hatred of oppression. When he, the guardian angel of Rebecca, was near, she was entirely changed. She then became docile, obedient, and gentle. Instead of destroying the flowers in the parterres, she tended them as affectionately as if they possessed the attribute of gratitude. She caressed her aunt Matilda's birds instead of teasing them, learned any lessons that Mr. Underdown would give her, and kept her dresses scrupulously clean. We will not say that her cousin had changed her nature; he had only torn away the weeds and brambles that had been allowed to grow over and conceal this rich and fair flower

the next victory which I should gain, or in which I should participate, would have enabled me, with this youth in my hand, to approach the foot of the throne, and say, 'Place me, your majesty, among the noble of the land, and permit this youth, the future husband of my only child, whom I have taught, by my side, to fight for his country and his king, to inherit my titles and my name.' Stand forth, Augustus, and speak! Have I been dreaming, like a foolish old man, or is this glorious thing to be? If not for the honour of your mother's house--the house of Bacuissart--will you not, for the glory of your father's long line of ancestry, stand one flash from the enemy's guns? ride but for one year triumphant over the waves that bore your old Norman progenitor, the grim Tramontane, to conquer, for his sons, a wide inheritance in these lands. Will you, I say, Augustus, do this, or prove recreant from both the houses from which you are descended, and compel me to adopt my

cabin boy, and give him my name and my daughter?"

"Don't trouble yourself about me, pa—I won't have him ; a cabin-boy, indeed!" bawled out the dutiful Rebecca.

"But if I say you shall, miss?" said the father.

"You will tell a fib, that's all," was the cool reply.

This little family sparring gave Augustus time to arrange his thoughts and frame his reply, which was to the following effect.

First kneeling to his mother, and kissing her hand, he said, "Mother, forgive me if I disobey you;" then, rising and advancing proudly to the Commodore, he said, "Uncle, forgive me if I have seemed slow to comply with the spirited appeal to my honour, my courage, my ambition, and my patriotism; but my excuses are around me. I am ready, this moment, to go with you. Even your stern character," and he faltered out the word stern, "will give me

some praise for my resolution, knowing, as you do," turning towards his mother, "how long I have loved her, blest and blessing."

"My noble boy, I do, I do; from this moment you are my son indeed," exclaimed Sir Octavius, hugging him to his brawny chest.

But what said the mother—that mother who already felt herself childless? She flung her arms wildly above her head, and murmured, "Now, indeed, am I deserted! my own son has forsaken me. Let me hasten to seek my God, or I shall think that He has forsaken me also;" and, in the depth of her misery, she sought the solitude of her own chamber, to pray and to weep.

We will hurry over the misery of the four days that intervened before the uncle and nephew departed for Portsmouth. No one seemed even comfortable but the Commodore—and he appeared only half pleased with his victory, and was often heard to murmur,

“What if I left him behind—the gentle-faced fool, they doat on him so; fine, noble lad though—the king must not lose him—I’ll watch over him like a cradled infant.” And they departed, amid the unrestrainable tears of all, save one, whose grief had assumed the sternness and immobility of despair.

I will not torture the reader by recounting the solemn adjuration of Lady Astell to the Commodore, on the morning of his departure. It was wild, and almost frantic; one moment she prayed to him as if he had been a divinity, and then she would invoke every blessing on his head, if he brought her son in safety to her arms, every curse that could torture his body here and his soul hereafter, if, through negligence or cruelty, he guarded not from all evil the hope of her heart, the jewel of her soul, the life of her existence. He promised, and repented of the deed he had done; but he was a wayward man, and he kept the resolution that he then wished he had never made.

This abstraining, almost forcibly, the son from his mother, his family, and his destined course of life, was fruitful of evil results from the beginning. Lady Astell retired to her own mansion; Mr. Underdown, of course, went to sea with the Commodore, and the meek, and rather weak Miss Matilda had not even the shadow of control over her wild niece, Rebecca; the good effects of the example and tuition of four years were lost in as many months, and the young lady became wilder and more ungovernable than ever.

In the meantime, Augustus had been entered as a midshipman in his uncle's ship, the *Terrific*, a first-class seventy-four, which, with three other line-of-battle ships, and two frigates, were watching a superior squadron in the harbour of Cherbourg. The Commodore's broad pennant was flying, of course, in the *Terrific*. Now the duty was most severe and unremitting; for this was the only disposable force that the French Directory then had, and

which was waiting for a favourable opportunity to slip to sea, in order to intercept our valuable East and West India homeward bound trade.

The Commodore was, at once, gentle and severe to his nephew; he exacted from him a strict performance of his duty, yet showed him, at every opportunity, great indulgences. But events were fast ~~souring~~ souring a temper that was never one that could be described as being too even. Taking the opportunity of the Commodore having been blown off the coast, the French squadron, consisting of six sail of the line, one of them a three-decker, and two large frigates, got to sea, after a six months' severe blockade: and, for five months longer, Sir Octavius was chasing them, almost literally, all over the world.

Now no one, since Sir Octavius had last joined, had, in the English squadron, placed foot upon the shore; the ships had been victualled at sea, by transports, sent across the

channel for that purpose; and, when they started on their long chase, they happened not to be too well provided. The privations of officers as well as men became great; but, during all this time, the softly-nurtured Augustus did his duty, and flinched not; he had gained the love of his brother officers, the good-will of the crew, and had extorted the admiration of the Commodore.

Away went the chasing squadron, bounding over the ocean, but the flying one sailed the faster. When Sir Octavius had arrived on the coasts of America, he was not soon enough: the fleet foe, which is not always the same as the foe's fleet, had preceded him to the West Indies. In a few weeks, the men who had been frost-bitten in the high and cold latitude of Newfoundland, were now in a state of solution under the life-exacting sun of the tropics. For a whole month, the two squadrons, with anything but innocent intentions towards each other, imitated that very innocent

game of little children, thread-the-needle, through all the West Indian islands; and the French Admiral, having nearly frightened all the Barbadian born out of what they are pleased to consider as their wits, in utter despair of doing anything successful, tripped across the Atlantic to the Cape of Good Hope, the Commodore always following and swearing after him.

The Frenchman, after looking into Table Bay and seeing nothing laid out for his accommodation, not only took French leave but also half-a-dozen English merchantmen at the same time; and thus re-victualled and *re-stored*, having taken out the kernels he cracked the hulls, and gravely allowed them to find their specific gravity in salt water—that is, having plundered the ships, he sank them. He then showed some indications of paying a visit to our Presidencies in the East, but either from a doubt of his reception or having worn out his holiday suit, he altered, at the same time, his courteous intentions and his course, and *stood* for any part of

the South American coast that he could *fetch*; which means, he sailed from such place to such place as the wind might *carry* him, leaving in his track several sea-marks of his late whereabouts in the shape of plundered and dismasted ships.

During all this time our old Commodore never once got a sight of the enemy, which all the seamen declared would have done him a *sight* of good, as it would have soothed him much to have been able so to have sworn, that he could have pointed his oaths directly at them. He had now nothing to damn and torment but himself and all those under him. The men were upon short allowance of everything but oaths and blows. I must confess, in this last trip of the Commodore, notwithstanding my great affection for him, he began to be very disagreeable, and the gratings were rigged a little more often than necessary. I have sailed over many thousand leagues of salt water myself, and I have always found that to keep a

fair temper was the best way to ensure a fair wind, and that the captain never made it blow harder by blowing up his men and officers; but the Commodore did not know that. Intellect had not then drawn on her seven-leagued boots and commenced her gigantic march, and nobody thought of getting steam up but through the spout of the tea-kettle.

So the Commodore, being ignorant, became a little passionate and a little tyrannical, spending too little time in sleep and the refectation of his body, and too much in trimming his vessels and his officers. We must suppose that the Frank had always either the best of the breeze or of the sailing, or of both, for by always keeping a-head of the Commodore, the Commodore was forced to keep a-stern of the Gaul without, which, the punning purser said, very naturally stirred up the Commodore's gall within. The pun was a *bitter* bad one, it must be confessed, but considering the state of the breadbags, and that all hands were six upon four, it may be

pardoned; for I look upon that man as little less than a hero who can pun on an empty stomach—the attempt of itself is heroical.

Now, for the first time, the failing, the besetting sin of Augustus began to show itself. This failing has been often lauded as a virtue; but whether failing or virtue, it had no business to show itself on board of a man-of-war, at least just before the mutiny at the Nore. It was as thorough a detestation of tyranny and oppression as ever swelled the bosom of a Hampden or brought a Russell to the scaffold. For the honour of the Commodore, who is our favourite and our hero, it must not be thought that he was more tyrannical than the other sea-kings of his time; not, perhaps, so much: but the activity of the chase had chased away from his bosom some of the gentler feelings; in fact, he was vexed; the worst state of mind for a man to be in who has the possession of unlimited power. He began to have unfavourable opinions of the exertions of his ship's company,

and those opinions he *backed*—need we say how?

Now, at all this, the gentle spirit of Augustus Astell rebelled, and the rebellion of a truly gentle spirit is always violent. He grew sick at the frequent floggings that he was forced to witness, and using the privilege that his uncle still gave to him, as the number of these cruel inflictions increased, when they were alone, he first petitioned, then remonstrated, and, foolish boy! at last denounced. He escaped scatheless through four, five, and even six scenes of this description; for the Commodore's heart yet clove to him, and he remembered that awful pledge that he had given his sister: but, through this ill-advised course, the pleader for humanity neither improved the temper of the Commodore nor the condition of the crew. Besides, young Astell was too good not to have a few enemies; and seeing the estrangement between the relatives, they, with all the assiduity of malice, endeavoured to foster it into something like a

respectably sized hate. All this time, Augustus kept himself more strictly to his duty, and seemed to be challenging from his cross old uncle more admiration and respect in the same proportion that he was fast losing his affection. In this state of affairs, the Commodore arrived at Rio Janeiro in bad weather and the worst of all possible humours. As usual, Monsieur Nimbleshanks had taken himself off twenty-seven hours before. The English squadron was forced to remain eighteen hours off this port to take in water and a few absolute necessities, during which delay, the Commodore's temper was so detestably bad, that an old quartermaster, who had served with him twenty-five years, observed "that if the angel Gabriel was to come down from heaven just then, and give his honour the Commodore an order on the storekeeper for a new eye, he would damn that and him before he condescended to clap it in the socket, or fling it into his chops for a wry word."

CHAPTER IV.

“ For who would bear the whips of the boatswain’s
cat,

Th’ oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,

.....The insolence of office,

And the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy
takes

When he himself might his quietus make—

By jumping overboard ?”

HAMLET AFLOAT.

I AM now fast fetching up lee-way, and bringing my incidents all in a good line of sailing; we shall soon get on superbly, taking a fresh departure from the land made by our first chapter, from which we have now greatly forged a-head. We beseech the reader to look upon all the chapters, with the exception of the first,

that he has hitherto read, as retrospective, necessary to understand the causes of the action of our tale, but which are not the action itself. When we bring up all our ships in the next chapter, we shall sail on proudly to the catastrophe. Let us shake out our reefs, sheet home, and away.

We have not, in our hurry to get over these preliminaries, had time to make that honourable mention of Mr. Underdown that he deserves. In all his journeyings with his patron, by land or by water, he would still preserve his independence, not permitting himself to be the object of any promotion afloat, or receiving any salary for his services on shore. He thus kept a complete command over the Commodore, or at least as much as it was possible for any moral authority to exercise. Though it was never avowed between the parties, he rightly understood from whence his moderate independence arose. It was more than sufficient for all his wants, and quite enough for his ambition.

Faithfully and zealously did he keep the tacit compact with her who had once listened to and so gently reproved his love, and at the same time so nobly attempted to make gracious that reproof, by commissioning him to watch over the wild passions of her brother. And Providence seemed to regard his undying attachment to the sister, and his unremitting devotion to the brother, with an approving eye, for he had stood near the Commodore in almost every action that the latter had fought, uninjured by a wound, whilst the warrior by profession hardly ever escaped unscathed. He had, more than once, sword in hand, leapt with the Commodore and the boarders on the decks of the enemy, and had unwillingly made his blade drink the life-blood of those opposed to him. At all this, he shuddered, and, for all this, he would receive no thanks, nor ever suffer himself to be entered on the ship's books, lest his usefulness should be diminished. He had his reward in his own bosom, and in the purity and sublimity

of his unrequited but fully appreciated attachment. Passion for Lady Astell had long passed away, and given way to a holier principle—a compound of worship and of love.

In the course of this long chase, Mr. Underdown, notwithstanding his habitual temperance, had nearly become a sacrifice to a tropical fever. Whilst his life was in danger, the Commodore's conduct was exemplary; and, near the sick cot of his noble and disinterested friend, he displayed all the watchfulness, and much of the tenderness of a woman. For a time, his own crew, and the ships under his command, derived much benefit from this affliction; during this his rugged temper was softened. However, long before the squadron had touched at Rio Janiero, the fever had left the patient, but had left him in so dreadful a state of exhaustion, as to threaten a decline, if the most nourishing diet and the purest of air could not be obtained; consequently, he was put on shore, to recruit, at Rio.

Bad as was the temper of the Commodore at this juncture, he could not prevent an honourable burst of natural feeling from breaking through his *morgue*. He wrung the hand of the invalid, as he was lifted, in his cot, into the barge, and, imploring him to hasten to England after him, exclaimed, as he sorrowfully watched the boat nearing the shore, "God help me, and those about me!" and then, as some relief to his feelings, turned the hands up for punishment, and liberally dispensed some twenty dozen of lashes among the ship's company.

We will not dilate upon the grief of Augustus, at the departure of his tutor and his friend, nor of the general and unsophisticated sorrow of the crew; for he was, indeed, their friend. They felt, and so they expressed themselves, that all good luck had gone with him. The spirit of mercy no longer hovered over the devoted ship. Sir Octavius Bacuissart became a rigid disciplinarian, his officers a

discontented faction, and his crew little better than a band of mutineers.

It was in this tempestuous and hurried chase towards Europe, that young Astell's soul revolted against his commander, and that he mentally threw off his allegiance to him, both as his military superior and his relative. They had, for some time, been upon the coolest terms, and they now began to hate each other, or to evince feelings almost as bitter as hate. Augustus hated what he deemed the tyranny and the cruelty of his uncle: and his uncle felt a deep and a gnawing resentment at the presumption of one whom he had lately loved so much, and whom he still could not help admiring, setting himself as a judge and censor upon his actions, and placing him at defiance by the rigid rectitude of his conduct. The Commodore would have made any sacrifice to have caught the young midshipman in some flagrant dereliction of duty, merely that he might have called him into his

cabin, to have forgiven, and thus, without appearing to humble himself, to have shaken his nephew by the hand. But, to use a midshipman's phrase, the young Astell was never "caught napping." Had he but just turned in, wet and weary, from having kept the middle watch, and the hands were turned up at two in the dark morning, and his stiffened limbs had just begun to relax, and sleep to steal away his painful sense of fatigue, he was the first to jump out of his hammock, and the last to leave his station on deck or in the tops.

It must be confessed, that if the Commodore did not spare his own crew, he never spared himself; for whenever manœuvres were to be performed, he was up and on deck all hours in the night; and, even on these occasions, he would roar out, "Where's Mr. Astell?" and Mr. Astell was always found at his post. After the duty was done, and the hands were piped down, he would retire slowly into his cabin, shaking his head mournfully, muttering

all the while, “ ‘The poor child, the obstinate fool, why don’t he go into the sick list? he never can stand it; and what shall I say to his poor mother?’ ” And then, breaking forth into a rage, he would shout, “ Steward! up, you lazy, bone-polishing, plate-lapping son of a —; you’re snug in your hammock, are you, whilst my nephew is shivering like the dog-vane in a north-easter? Up, sluggard, I say, and mull a pint of my very best port wine, by the spirit-lamp: don’t spare the warm spices, and take it to Mr. Astell’s hammock: tell him the doctor sent it him; for, hark ye me, if ever he finds out it came from me, I’ll start every bone in your skin ” And then he would go on soliloquising, “ If it were not like bearding me in my command, I would make it up with the lad; a fine spirit, I must own. And is he not to be the father of my grandchildren?—I’ll ask him to breakfast to-morrow. But suppose the young dog should refuse?—like enough, like enough—no, we’ll wait awhile.” He

waited: and almost ruined his nephew and his own happiness for ever.

Now, the old Commodore, I assure *you*, the best friends I have in the world, my readers, was a strange and most intimate mixture of good and evil. If I had chosen, I might have made my old Commodore the Commodore of popularity, a fighting, drinking, generous, good-hearted, vulgar swab. But I rather choose to draw from life: and, as I had the real character fresh in my recollection—for the old boy often mast-headed me himself—and as almost all my incidents are real, and being naturally of a somewhat indolent temper, I have used what I found ready-made to my hand without troubling myself to create a probable fiction. A better seaman, a better navigator, a better naval tactician than the Commodore could not be found; and a better man—to find whom would have been no hard task—would not, assuredly, in his position and in his times, have done so well.

Though he had not, at this period, attained his fiftieth year, he was known throughout the navy as “the fighting old Commodore,” and well understood to be a man of the most desperate determination. When the squadron sailed on this long, memorable, and distressing chase, the seeds of that mutiny which so soon after sprang up in such dreadful fertility, and produced such bitter fruit, were plentifully disseminated in the little squadron. The other ships under Sir Octavius’s command would have long before broken out into open revolt, had not their crews felt assured that the *Terrific* would be alongside of them at the first symptoms of disobedience: and they knew that he, at least, could and would keep his crew in subjection; and they judged rightly. After all, the Commodore was no miracle; like most of us, he was the creature of those circumstances that had educated him a thriving and truculent son, whom his father, *Arbitrary Power*, had begotten upon that too

willing and too wilful jade, Irresponsibility. Besides, he had owed all his success in life to skilful daring and well-organized violence : and, as these had hitherto always enabled him to take the ships of the enemy, he thought that the same principles, properly modified by circumstances, would enable him duly to govern his own—and so they did ; but, thanks to the philanthropy of this generous nation, and the good sense of the officers of the naval service, they will suffice no longer.

But to return to our squadron. Their present duty was of a nature the most distressing ; with the exception of a few hours at single anchor—once at St. John's, Newfoundland, and again at Rio—they had been nearly fourteen months at sea, during the whole of which time the ships' companies had been necessarily put six upon four, that is, reduced one third of the allowance of their by no means nutritious food, and often upon a quart of fresh water a day per man. At that period, the ships were infamously

victualled as to quality, and before the mutiny it was generally acknowledged that even the *full* naval allowance of provisions was insufficient for the healthy support of a stout and able-bodied man.

The scurvy had begun to eat its terrible way through the ships' companies. Fresh beef and vegetables were now things only to be thought of with the agony of hope. A sort of mirage of turnips, carrots, potatoes, and cabbage, were continually before the eyes, but, alas! many a weary league from their mouths. It is true, the Commodore gave the men full latitude of grumbling, only with this proviso, that if the expression of it, either by word or gesture, reached him, they should be flogged. He told them that he had not yet begun to complain, and that he fared exactly as they did—which was *almost* true—and that it was just as noble a deed to starve as to fight for one's country; and once, when twelve large, brawny, expressively hungry Jacks came aft, with

three ribs of beef upon a wooden platter—when these men, who could have, between them, swallowed and digested a live jackass—barrin' that it was iron-shod, and they were permitted to begin at the tail—when these men came and asked the Commodore respectfully, If those three bare ribs, with a piece of ruddled up salted mahogany that lined the extremities of the bones, weighing about two ounces avoirdupois, were to be served out to them for an eight-pound piece of beef—which was to support twelve fellows that day and the next, which was banyan day—the old gentleman put his one eye close to it, scrutinizing the morsel as if it had been an entomological specimen of rare genus. After this visual examination, he thrust the iron spike that he always carried at the end of his arm—when he did not screw on his fork, or his spring pincers to hold his cards at whist—into the little flesh discoverable, and holding out his arm like a steel-yard, began balancing it, as if to ascertain its monstrous

littleness of weight, and that, too, with a countenance full of commiseration—he was just on the point of sending for the purser, when his sharp single eye caught, ranged along the main-deck, an interminable line of hungry men, with miserably filled platters, all anxiously waiting the result of the bold and piteous expostulation, ready to rush on, each with his complaint.

The Commodore was decided in a moment. He saw, at once, that all redress was precluded by the magnitude of the evil; so he turned sternly to the complainants, and said, “My men, you had better, to save your flesh, pick your bones yourselves. It is dangerous to sup soup with the devil, or to permit your captain to pick a bone with you. I shall look over your fault this time, of being hungry, as it may be an accident when it happens to no more than twelve of you; but to any above that number it is downright mutiny.”

The complainants walked off their bones,

eyeing them most wickedly, and wishing that they possessed the teeth and the stomachs of hyænas : and the long line of expectants on the main-deck, each with his wooden platter in his hand, slunk down below, thinking himself fortunate to have escaped a scored back for his mutinous expression of hunger.

Now there can be no doubt but that this will appear to the philanthropic reader, not only very cruel, very arbitrary, and very unjust, on the part of our worshipful Commodore, but moreover insulting ; and I am sure that all my female readers will exclaim, with a parenthetical sigh, that if the Commodore could not have relieved the hunger of his men, he should have pitied and mourned over it, showing that he sympathised (I believe *sympathised* is the right word) with their griefs, if he could not relieve them. No such thing. Under his then existing circumstances, the Commodore did what was right ; it was a trial, a struggle between discontent and autho-

rity. Had not Sir Octavius proved what the seamen call “game to the back-bone,” the crew would, to use the Commodore’s own expression, have had other bones to pick with the Commodore, if he had been weak enough to pick with them the first that were offered to him. They only wanted an acknowledged grievance for a stalking-horse, on which to mount mutiny armed *cap-à-pie*. By my small share of the glory of my country, I swear—a very little and a very pardonable oath—that my principles of moral right are fast oozing away with my ink, and that I am become the apostle of expediency. I am sorry for it; but when shall we all start fair in the race of justice?—tell me, O ye divines and moralists, when? and then I will tell you the exact moment when expediency ought to cease on the face of the earth.

But it is a dreadful thing to be mistaken;—I will try to make myself clearly understood. Expediency, to promote private interest, is

villany—the public good, often wisdom, and sometimes virtue. This is no casuistry ; but merely common sense. Supposing that a man, tainted with the plague, was about to enter a room full of healthy persons ; let us suppose that the aggravation of the disease had produced insanity : expostulation with the intruder would be useless, and contact death. Who will say that to shoot this man on the threshold would not be an act of justice, as well as an act of expediency ? It is within the range of possibility that the pest-stricken might have recovered, and that he might not have contaminated those upon whom he was intruding ; but such an act, under such circumstances, would have been just ;—to whom ? not, certainly, to the victim, but to the many.

In the toil and contention of public life, modified cases like these are continually occurring : and these considerations must be pleaded in defence of many of the actions of the Commodore ; for I must confess that no-other defence

have they* got. But, whilst I am pleading his cause, I have forgot his person—Oh ! I left him on the quarter-deck, having just sent away twelve tall fellows, grumbling in smothered voices from the fulness of their grievances, and in stomachs from actual emptiness.

But as Richard Stubbs, the captain of the mess, and the man who bore the bones, had, bones and all, nearly disappeared down the Jacob's ladder, a change came o'er the spirit of the Commodore's countenance ; for he puckered up his red and knotty features into something like a grin, then again resumed his usually desperately stern look, and, at length, relaxed into a low whistle ; but it was sufficiently audible for those on deck to recognise in it, distinctly, the tune of " O the roast beef of Old England ! O the Old English roast beef ! "

Richard Stubbs heard it too : and, instead of smiling at the droll coincidence, like the officers near Sir Octavius—for they were allowed to smile on the quarter-deck, though

none but the Commodore and the winds were allowed to whistle on that sacred spot—Richard Stubbs, I say, shook his head mournfully over the fleshless bones of oxality, while his outstanding pigtail made solemn gyrations in the unconscious air.

“Come here, my men,” blustered out the Commodore in his gruffest voice; “come aft, sir, with that excellent eight-pound piece of beef, immediately. Shall I call the boatswain’s mate to freshen your way?”

So Dick Stubbs came aft, very naturally expecting three dozen at least for shaking his head at the Commodore’s tune.

“Well, sir,” said the Commodore, when the penitent Richard had taken his position on the quarter-deck, holding the unlucky beef bones in one hand, and a wiry curl that hung over his right temple in the other.

“I am no judge of music, your honour; it was the excellent eight-pound piece of beef that I was thinking on.”

“ Well, my man; and what might your thoughts be?”

It might have been the shifting of the Commodore's quid, or it might have been a smile, but, whatever it was, it encouraged Stubbs to the unheard-of boldness to reply: “ Sir Hoct-ive-us”—the middle syllable duly accentuated—“ my thoughts were that we might think of it for all the satisfaction we should get out of it, as we should not ever be able to dine on it.”

“ Pray how long have you been at sea?”

“ Let me see, your honour, so that I mayn't tell your honour a word of a lie; come next June I shall be thirty-five, then that makes, man and boy, just twenty-four years.”

“ Mostly in what craft?”

“ In all manner of *craft*, Sir Hoct-ive-us, without ever being over and above *cunning*.”

“ I should think so; but principally in what service?”

“ In his Majesty's, God bless him!”

At this reply, the Commodore gently lifted his little three-cornered cocked hat an inch, without uncovering his head; for, at that period, he was ultra in his loyalty and downright honest in his 'Toryism. After this little ceremony, he continued looking dreadfully grim, as some compensation to himself for the little act of humility that he had just performed.

“Did you ever hear, Richard Stubbs, of the ‘Devil’s dumplings?’”

“Lord bless your honour and his Majesty, no, sir,” said Richard, again all trembling.

“Order the master-at-arms to send aft every third man who was going to bring his beef under my nose to-day—every third captain of the messes, I mean,”—and then, without seeming to pay much attention to the looks of those about him, the old gentleman set up his steady quarter-deck walk, with a long leg and a short one.

The master-at-arms and ship’s corporals were some time collecting every third man, for the

captains of the messes did not seem to be actuated by that public spirit which induced the eight citizens of Calais to offer themselves to appease the wrath of the exasperated Edward, of pugnacious memory.

They were mustered at length, the most part of them making up their minds that, bad as was their condition, their backs would shortly fare worse than their bellies. This anticipation did not, however, create so much sensation among them as may be supposed. At that blessed period, captains ordered and men received a couple of dozen of lashes with the same sang-froid, as relations do so many bottles of wine between them at Christmas-time.

When the Commodore had them all properly toe-ing a line, he placed himself before the centre man: he cast his one ogre-eye fiercely up and down the rank, and then said sharply, "My men, do any of you know what 'Devil's dumplings' are?"

Most of the catechumens (I like a hard word

when I can press one into the service) shook their heads, though some scratched them, and all felt a tingling across the shoulders, as if they were conscious that the recipe for this anti-paradisiacal pastry would be written there in red ink. But as their silence was a complete manifestation of their ignorance, the Commodore proceeded, and by this time he had acquired a very numerous audience, almost every officer in the ship having assembled to hear the Commodore great in gastronomy.

“My men, I have served his Majesty before most of you were born--(the hat lifted as usual at ‘Majesty’)—and at a time when British seamen gloried in their hardships, and could live upon their glory, for they had very often little else to eat; but you—you are a fallen race, a set of gormandizing rascals, who are only thinking of how much living fat you can turn his sacred Majesty’s, God bless him!—(hat higher than usual)—pork and pease into. It is of no use telling such ravenous eaters as you are,

how, when I sailed in the Weasel in the Dutch war, the men were put upon an ounce of bullock's hide, taken off the main yard, per day per man, and when this failed us, we tried what kind of wood, when reduced to sawdust, would make the best substitute for flour. After several trials, we found that the hard wood we got from the Spanish main answered the purpose best ; and, ever after, it was called *lignum vitæ*, or the log of life, just in the same way as we call bread of wheaten or barley meal the staff of life ; and then the little round wooden wheels in our blocks began to get the name of sheaves, for really they were as sheaves of corn to us. Now, you lubbers, I can tell you, that this log-of-life bread was very nutritious, when you had digested it, though I confess that it was rather hard for the teeth ; the only two imperfect grinders that I have in my head, I broke in gnawing it ; but, you dogs, I should have bolted it, as the Derbyshire clodhoppers do, fat bacon Oh ! I see I am making your hungry

chops water at the bare idea of the greasy delicacy. I was wrong; I must 'bout ship, and stand on the other tack. Now, my men, ever since I have had command of this ship and squadron, I have been like a father to you all."

"Ay," said the bull-faced chaplain, who had placed himself close to the orator's elbow, "you have always imitated the divine example; you have chastened those whom you have loved."

"Give us none of your jaw till church time," said his amiable communicant, twisting his spiritual adviser out of the way by means of his iron hook: he continued, "So, my men, d'ye see, I love ye like my own children; and, bating that I have spared the rod, I have proved myself to you a wise and indulgent parent—a little too indulgent, mayhap—allowed a little too much for lee way in my dead reckoning with you all, but I hope none of you will take advantage of my weakness. Now, for the good of his Majesty's service, God bless him, and may he never see a banyan day!—(hat lifted)—

you have all been placed six upon four; and hot weather and long keeping will make salt pork and beef shrink like a lawyer in his shroud. I know all this, and I likewise know that ye are not like the men I sailed with in the Dutch wars; in those days four of them would eat up an ox at a meal, or live upon his hoofs for a fortnight, as the case might be, according to orders, and as was most fitting for the good of the service. Ah! there were giants in those days; and sages, too, who made their giants' strength still stronger by their wisdom; and it was those sages who taught the seamen, when provisions ran short, how to make Devil's dumplings. Now, my men, as I wish you to make the most of your rations, and as I do not think that any considerations could induce *me* to allow you to eat the hides of the yards or grind up the blocks for flour, you had better listen attentively;"—and then the Commodore, taking out of his pocket a well-thumbed volume of Roderick Random, which he generally carried

about with him, holding the book in his right hand, commenced very deliberately turning over the leaves with his iron left, as if to discover the right place, and then, pretending to read, went on, with a look sour enough to pickle cabbage without vinegar, as follows: "Page the 75th, chapter the 14th. 'How to make Devil's dumplings. Let the cook of the mess take a four-and-twenty-pound shot, or a shot of any other weight, the heavier the better, and clean it well with spittle and fresh oakum.'"

Here three midshipmen burst out into indecorous laughter, and were immediately sent to the three respective mast-heads for their unmannerly interruption of the solemnity of the proceedings; and, after the Commodore had eyed them half up the rigging, he continued to appear to read—

" ' Spittle and fresh oakum—.' "

" And then gut it and skin it 'ill come next," said Stubbs, *sotto voce*, to his neighbour on the line; "and what will the gunner say?"

“ ‘ And fresh oakum ; then take all the bones you can get, whether of pork or of beef it matters not, and pound them into a pulp, of the consistency of damp flour. You must then return the shot to the shot-rack, and take for every handful of said pulp three handfuls of oatmeal, mix carefully with cold water, and knead all together into dough, and then tie up into dumplings of half a pound each, boil three hours in salt water, season them with gunpowder, and serve up hot as hell. The above dish will be found the most wholesome and savoury that you can put upon the mess-table, *when no better can be procured.*’ ”

“ I arn’t a morsal o’ doubt of it, Sir Hock-tiovas,” said a grim old quarter-master, one of the instructed.”

“ Nor I either, nor any reasonable man,” said the Commodore, in continuation. “ But here is a note at the end of the recipe, which I feel bound to read to you. ‘ If any sea-faring man, whether sailor or marine, (the cook having

left any splinters of the said bones unpounded,) should, enticed by the relish, swallow portions of these dumplings too greedily, and the said bones or any of them stick in his throat, he may relieve himself, either by thrusting them down with a greased monkey's tail, or have them forced upwards, by requesting his messmates to pummel him between the shoulders, to do either of which he may use his pleasure, and then the cook may be suitably clobbered afterwards.' ”

The Commodore paused, looking at the men, handspikes, and crowbars, and though to a nice observer of human nature, or to a proficient in physiognomy, it might have been evident that he was giving vent to the acerbity of his temper in mockery, not a smile, throughout this ridiculous scene, could be found lurking in the crevices of his rugged features—he might have been willing also to hint to them that, with the usual carelessness of seamen, they did not make the most

of their food, when suffering under a privation only less than famine.

After he had given the men this survey, to let them understand fully that he was not joking, as he was closing the book to return it into his pocket, the ugly old quarter-master, who had before spoken, and who, with the trifling exceptions of rank, education, and mutilations, was the counterpart of the Commodore himself, hitched back his right foot, and bobbing his head, in a parson's-clerk' like tone of voice, said, "I thank ye heartily for me, Sir Hocktiovas Baccky-squirt."

"And what do *you* thank me for so much, wiry old sinner that you are?"

"For the choice of the two pleasures after dinner, Sir Hocktiovas."

"Go along with you, I am more than a father to ye all; and hark ye me, my men, if for the future your whacks run small, make devil's dumplings; better fill your bellies with them, than your heads with mutinous ideas;

and when you know that you are serving your country, and chasing a flying enemy, you ought to relish them more than manna from heaven. Go down and finish your dinners, and tell my steward to give you a gill of rum each."

And then they tumbled down into the main and lower decks, swearing that the fighting old Commodore was, after all, the boy for them, and that they would give the dumplings a fair trial at least, leaving out the seasoning.

The officers, who, almost to a man, had collected on the quarter-deck to witness this scene, knew not what to make of it, and many of them looked imploringly into the Commodore's countenance, as if asking for permission to laugh. But he appeared inexorable, and as they found that they could not enjoy their risibility with him, they went below, and had their laugh out ; but laugh as they might, they found the men more active and cheerful, and

the duty of the ship to go on much more smoothly, than before.

This duty was trying. During the day-time, the squadron was placed in a line, each ship nearly ten miles from the other, so they swept as they sailed on, more than a degree and a-half of longitude in their observation : as night appeared they closed gradually near the Terrific in the centre, and all this time they carried all the sail they could with safety to the masts ; but the enemy for whom they were in search, eluded them still. But during all this hard work, did any one ever make, or, more important yet, any one partake, of a devil's dumping ? Yes, and they were first brought on the Commodore's table, and there too they were first eaten, at least, as far as I can collect from persons who sailed in the ship at the same time.

Three days after he had given out his culinary instructions, as the Commodore was seated at table with his first lieutenant, the officer of the forenoon watch, one half-starved

reefer, the chaplain at the foot of the table, and the purser on his right hand, their host made the usual excuses of being able to give them no more than the ship's provisions, made more appetizing by the skill of the cook. For the first course, there was at one end of the table a soup made of the ship's pease—grey-coated gentlemen that scorned to be split, and endued with a surprising hardness of heart, considering the boiling to which they had been subjected; but this preparation was made unctuous, and consequently nutritious, by gobbets of fat and rancid salt-pork, floating amongst the impervious pease; and at the other end there stood a superb tureen of lobscouse. Everybody knows what lobscouse is; it is a dish fit for the gods, and of that satisfying nature, that a spoonful is sufficient for a whole year for a mere mortal, when he can get anything else to eat.

There were two dishes of fish in the centre: a shark had been caught the day before,

and these dishes were parts of one of them—strips of the tail fried in Florence oil, and the other strips of the said tail boiled *au naturel*, as a Frenchman would say, both dishes to be grinned at, if you like, but at the same time, most certainly to be eaten if you are ravenously hungry. At the very short stay of the squadron at Rio Janeiro, there had not been sufficient time to lay in any stock of vegetables whatever, therefore the Captain's cook had most judiciously not sent up any of those watery and unsubstantial aliments. He knew that neither his master nor his guests were Pythagoreans. But, though there were no vegetables, generally so named, yet there was one very excellent dish of vegetable growth, and as fresh as any nobleman could have procured it, at his lordly mansion in merry old England. It was an exquisite salad, made of mustard and cress, grown in the garden of the Commodore's stern walk. The table was, from first to last, well furnished

with good wines, though Sir Octavius was never known, fond as he was of his glass, to commit, at sea, an excess in drinking.

On the second course, the pease-soup gave place to a dish of very thin slices of fried salt pork laid upon biscuits, well soaked in fresh water, to make them soft, and then fried with sweet oil with the pork. This dish would not have been amiss, had not the biscuits been too rich with the multitudes of fat white maggots, and the crustaceous wevils that had burrowed all over them. Many people acquire a taste for these living condiments: we wish them joy of their aptibility of increasing the sources of their enjoyments—maggots in our head, we may have got, and we will keep them too, please God; but we will also keep maggots out of our mouth as long as we can. Every one to his taste, as the ostrich said, when he gobbled up a bushel of tenpenny nails.

The remove for the fish in the centre, was a solid, and noble-looking imitation of a sirloin of

beef, modelled in red rock-salt; it was a deception, but a grand one, as it smoked, and a few pendules of fat hung about it. The purser tried to get a slice off it with the carving-knife, but it turned the edge of the instrument; and there was an end of the matter. There is no doubt but that once it formed a component part of a living bull, that had passed a long life of gallantry to the Ios of that most gallant of all countries, the gem of the sea; but now the saltpetre had crystallised the animal fibre, and the sirloin was, at present, only a little less solid than a fossil remain.

At the vain attempt to carve with a knife, what perhaps could only be separated by a mason's saw, the Commodore shook his head roguishly at the purser, and said to him, "You are like him mentioned in the scripture—when we ask you for food you give us stones."

"Under sufferance," said the chaplain, "you should have said bread, Sir Octavius."

But nobody minded the interruption; who ever listened to the chaplain when he talked about the bible on board, in the reign of George the Third? or before Gambier brought religion and bohea tea into fashion in the navy?

“It is,” said the purser, speaking at the same time as the chaplain, but a couple of notes above him—“it is certainly, Sir Octavius, one of the completest specimens of passive resistance that it was ever my fortune to meet with. But might it not, Sir Octavius, be subjected to the pulverising effects of a four-and-twenty-pound shot, and thus be converted into succulent food for young succubi, under the denominations of devil’s dumplings?”

“Certainly, your suggestion is good; put it into your store-room, it is the very dish for your children at Gosport.” And then the Commodore guffawed, and the first lieutenant roared, and the officer of the forenoon watch shouted, and the chaplain grunted, and the

purser simpered, but it was with a difference, and the midshipmen giggled, whilst they all thought they had laughed; cachinnated would have been the better word, and the more scholarly, but it has been somewhat over-worn by titled ladies who write novels, so let us laugh whilst we cachinnate afterwards, and let no one suppose that the two words mean, according to the fair writers, the same thing.

We have seen the Commodore under the double eclipse of rum-and-water and the gout, on shore, and certainly something in his dotage—we have seen him the stern, ill-tempered, sarcastic, yet far calculating tyrant on his quarter-deck—and now, we shall find him in his own cabin, and, at the head of our table, a somewhat different personage. Reader, how I love to address you personally—it seems as if I had really got me a secure hold of the third button of your waistcoat, and that I was at every sentence drawing you still more closely to my heart: we shall understand each other excellently

before we have done yet, and you shall thoroughly understand the character of my hero—which yet you do not—but you have already found out that he has that weakness common to women, “of being best pleased when he has his own way,” until he got tired of it, and then he wanted that of other people, which neither you nor the ladies ever do.

Well, whenever Sir Octavius Bacuissart had unscrewed the short spike that he usually wore on his artificial arm, and had screwed thereunto his ample three-pronged fork—he screwed on with it a great deal of the urbanity of a gentleman, and did indeed seem, for a time, to forget that he was the Commodore, though it certainly was rather dangerous for the guests to forget it also. So, whilst he smiled and talked with his guests, and held up his fork to be wiped, when the rest of the company changed theirs, like a little boy who had dirtied his fingers with the treacle-pot, you would have thought him a very placable animal indeed.

But we must make progress with our description of this dinner.

The lobscouse at the lower end of the table had been removed, and, in its place, was served a dish of mincemeat, made of parts of the viscera of the same bountiful shark, and what with curry-powder, and other provocatives, made a dish by no means unpalatable; and, as the wine circulated pretty freely, and the host had not yet begun to talk quarter-deck, every one found himself 'as happy as a pig in a turnip field, his nose just emancipated from the appetite-denying ring. I might have used the simile either of having found himself in elysium, or in clover—but people will write tales after me, and why should I occupy all the *new* and the *best* comparisons? By my beard, I am too generous.

The third course made its appearance: under the nose of the Commodore, smoked an ample plum-duff, baked. The centre dish was a failure being nothing better than ship's

biscuit baked, so that if you ate it, you did not eat the insect tribes that it contained, alive. There should have been there a superb dish of twice-laid, only the rats had eaten up all the salt fish, and the Commodore and his friends had eaten up all the potatoes; but there were ample amends made for this disappointment in the noble dish of dough-boys, that fumed up odoriferously at the lower end of the table, with its accompanying rich sauce of Florence oil, cinnamon, and sugar. The Commodore peered his one eye over at them—the first lieutenant ogled them with both his—the second lieutenant stared at them—the chaplain mentally blessed them—and had a great mind to do them honour, by resaying over them the grace before meat—the purser was singling out the largest—and the midshipmen had already one hand upon the sauce-boat, in blissful anticipation.

Now the Commodore's dough-boys were famous throughout the fleet; the dough-boy

of nautical eating is generally nothing more than a mixture of flower and water, boiled unleavened bread, so tenacious and hard, that you might use them for a bowl for skittles, or, on an emergency, fire off for round shot, and with good hopes of doing considerable execution.

But the Commodore's dough-boys were *toute-autre-choses*. The cook of the generous giver of dough-boys was a Palermeritan, and had a secret, entirely his own, of making these little puddings almost as light as a *vol-au-vent*; and the process he used for their fermentation left after it neither the bitter taste of yeast, nor the sour one of the common French leaven. The Commodore had always a few barrels of the finest American flour devoted to the sole purpose of manufacturing these delicacies.

They are on the table, exactly six of them, looking rich in the brown sauce with which they are covered, and corresponding to the number of guests at the table. The Commodore having

a design upon two of them for his own share, commences with an insinuating smile to his first lieutenant, "Shall I help you to a slice of this plum-duff; it looks very good."

But the artifice was seen through. "I thank you, Sir Octavius, no; a dough-boy, if you please."

To the same hypocritical question all round, he received no other answer than that of "A dough-boy, if you please, sir."

At length, each is happy at having one of the coveted globes smoking on his plate, and swimming in a fresh supply of sauce. Almost simultaneously, a piece, not remarkable for its diminutive size, is conveyed into the mouth of each, and with a crash spat out again by four of the party—the midshipman and the parson had bolted theirs in their epicurean eagerness; then followed execrations and curses, and the calling for water to wash away the taste of the abominations from their mouths. In the first paroxysms of his rage, the Commodore sent

for his steward, his cook, and his cook's-mate, fully resolving to make them eat up the horrible compound, and then to procure them a good digestion for it, by giving them six dozen a-piece.

As the astonished accused stood trembling and protesting their ignorance, the purser commenced a more minute examination of his dough-boy, which he had taken care should be the largest. Upon forcing it open with his knife and fork, he discovered in the centre a slip of paper, upon which was written legibly, "A devil's dumpling, respectfully presented to Sir Hocketiveus Baccky Squirt. N. B. Greased monkeys' tails can be had of the gunner, upon application."

The scene was now changed to outrageous laughter, and the Commodore bore the quizzing excellently. He, however, sent his servants forward among the men, to ascertain who it was that had played them this trick, of substituting the nauseous boluses for his own deli-

cacies. The joke went round the ship, and the men were exceedingly merry, and the evening was also spent in temperate hilarity in the cabin.

But that man who would pretend to weather the old Commodore, must brace up sharp, and lie nearer than five points to the wind, and make good headway at the same time. The usual agents in these affairs having failed to discover who the bold fellow was that had sent this present of pastry to the Commodore, the next morning he put a new face upon the matter, and for the first time for some weeks he appeared merry and jocular on the quarter-deck, though he seemed as far as ever from his chance of overtaking the French squadron. He spoke openly of the affair to every one on the quarter-deck and on the poop, and loudly too; called it a most ingenious joke, and one that deserved reward; and declared, that if he could find out the modest man who had amused him so much, he would make him a present of

six guineas, and that was little enough for so droll a fellow. Now, as every one knew that the word of Sir Octavius was inviolable, this talk had the desired effect. Our former friend, Richard Stubbs, looking very sheepish, it is true, crept aft in doubt, often retreating as he approached where stood his commander ; but knowing that he was eyed by some twenty of his shipmates from the forecastle, he took off his hat, and put the best face he could upon the matter.

“ Well, Richard Stubbs,” said the Commodore, looking sunnily and encouragingly upon him, “ what can I do for you ?”

“ I come to beg your honour’s pardon for the great liberty that I taked in sending to your honour promiscuously a few of the dumplings your honour was so kind as to tell us how to make ; and I hope—I hope—”

“ You hope what, Stubbs ?”

“ As how your honour liked them.”

“ Oh, Stubbs ! I liked them so well, and

the delicate manner in which you caused them to be conveyed to me, that I am going to pay you for them. There are six guineas for you, my fine fellow, and much good may they do you."

"And I hope," said the joyous Stubbs, knotting up the cash in the ends of his silk handkerchief, "that your honour has taken no offence, and that you have quite entirely forgiven me the liberty I was so bold as to take."

"Entirely, my fine fellow; and now go to your duty, and when I want you again I shall send for you." And away went the maker of "devil's dumplings" among the crew, the happiest man in the squadron.

Now, Augustus Astell, whom we have too long neglected, witnessed all this, and began to hold some better opinion of his uncle. But his faith in his conversion did not last quite an hour. There were some ominous preparations going on: the quarter-masters were rigging the gratings, and the boatswains'-mates

were stroking down the tails of their cats coaxingly, in order to make them lie straight. These preparations did not, however, startle Richard Stubbs. There was generally somebody to be punished at noon, and he was preparing with a great deal of nonchalance to play the part of the spectator.

“It is twelve o’clock, Sir Octavius,” said the master.

“Make it so, and turn the hands up to punishment ;” and to punishment the hands were turned up accordingly. The marines having been drawn up under arms on the gangway, and the other forms having been observed, the black list was called through, and the culprits took their two, three, or four dozen, in all varieties of ways. When the list was exhausted, and every one was expecting the order to pipe to dinner, the Commodore ordered James Stubbs to stand forward and to strip : every one was surprised, and Augustus disgusted. All this Sir Octavius knew not,

nor would he have cared if he had known ; but in a quiet, imperturbable voice he said, “ Richard Stubbs, for your attention in sending me those devil’s dumplings, I have thanked, and I hope sufficiently rewarded you ; but I have another duty to perform,—to punish you for stealing mine. Seize him up ; give him six dozen.” When he had received them all, the boatswain and the boatswains’-mates made the decks musical with piping to dinner ; and poor Richard Stubbs, as he crawled to the surgeon to have his raw back dressed, muttered, that nothing was ever more true than the old proverb which says, “ he must have a long spoon who would sup soup with the devil.”

CHAPTER V.

.....“ Hast seen the apparition ?”

“ I, good sir ? O no ! And I am happy,

In that it was invisible to me.

‘ Talks it, as well as walks ?’

“ By parish clock

‘ Three hours, sans intermission.’

“ Is’t true ? What said the shadowy preacher ?”

“ Those who heard it know not ; for their hearts
Did palpitate so loudly.”

“ A very awful ghost !”

OLD PLAY.

As Sir Octavius protested that he wanted neither seamanship, navigation, nor just ideas of naval discipline, he induced the Admiralty not to appoint a captain under him to the Terrific ; but, as he could not, with any respect to de-

cency, put in the plea that he wanted no religion, so, much to his annoyance, he had a chaplain appointed to his ship. We respect the sacred calling, and honour its ministers, and, therefore, when we describe what a chaplain was sixty years since, our motives must not be misunderstood, though the accuracy of our picture may be doubted.

In the first place, they were not the men of learning and piety that now are a grace and a blessing to his Majesty's navy. No man in orders, whilst he could procure a curacy on shore, would accept a chaplaincy afloat. We forget the exact amount of the remuneration then offered them, but it was so low, that it was an insult. When the persecuted divine got on board his ship, he was repelled by all classes, and revered by a few individuals only, who dared not betray their feelings. He was shifted about from ship to ship continually, all being anxious to pass him away as an incumbrance. If Captain A. wanted a couple

of good sail-makers, and Captain B. could spare them in exchange for two able seamen, the latter would not let the former have them, unless he relieved him of his chaplain into the bargain. Against the general contempt no man can bear up; and generally, not being the *élite* of the profession, they soon gave way to circumstances, and always settled down into the captain's sycophant, and generally into the captain's spy.

To the ship's company they were neither of spiritual, nor any other service; and, as to their reading the funeral service over the dead, we have seen that imposing rite performed by officers, in a manner as pious, as effective, and as solemn, as ever stoled clergyman, or even mitred bishop, could have achieved. The chaplains of that time were never to be found encouraging the departing soul, strengthening the wavering faith, or endeavouring to penetrate the hardness, or shame the depravity of the human heart. If they were of any utility

at all, they were useful after a strange fashion. The instructors of the midshipmen in what? in the articles of their faith? in making them humble, self-denying, and truly christian? none of those; but in geometry and trigonometry, plane and middle latitude sailing; not how to perform a work of grace, but to work a day's work. For doing all this, they were usually paid, at the rate of half-a-crown per month by each pupil.

For my own part, startling as my opinion may be, I shall state it, but with all humility. Chaplains have no business on board of his Majesty's fleets in time of actual war. I have come to this conclusion from motives of religion only. There is an air of hypocrisy about the thing. Under the 'new and blessed dispensation, we are taught to worship Him as a God of love; to resist oppression and injustice, not by bloodshed and murder, but by returning good for evil; by offering our cloak to the robber of our coat, and the left cheek to the smiter of

our right. We know, from the depravity of our common nature, we cannot act up to this scale of perfection ; all I say is, that it looks something like a pious mockery, to place a person who is bound, by everything solemn and holy, to preach all this, in a machine armed with the most deadly and dreadful engines of destruction that can be devised, wherewith to commit homicide by wholesale. I have often inwardly smiled, on a Sunday, in the Toulon fleet, when we were doing all we could to bring the French into action, at the pious unction which the chaplain bestowed on the part of the litany which says, “ From *battle*, murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord deliver us.” Surely, surely, this is a grievous mockery.

We know not whether this particular petition is now omitted, but we do know that then it was always constantly used ; and we also know, that it is in direct opposition to the articles of war, in which officers and men are

imperatively and very *properly* enjoined, with ferocious perspicuity of expression, to do their utmost to kill, slay, lay waste, burn and destroy, under *the penalty of death*. This is both the tone and the meaning of the article of war, though we have it not by us, to quote it *verbatim*.

But let us suppose that this absurd discrepancy of praying to be delivered from battle, at the time that we are doing our best to seek it, should have been noticed in the proper quarter, and that particular petition left out, when the litany is now read, then there will be thousands of our fellow-Christians, who may not come to the foot of the throne of mercy with a petition emphatically christian, or—but we will not point still more sharply the horns of this dilemma.

Again, as one chaplain is generally found to be one too many in every ship, we do not think that the most pious, and the most eager for the diffusion of religious instruction, would

desire many ; and yet liberty of conscience is a birthright of Englishmen. Very often, there are more Catholics and more Presbyterians in particular ships, than of any other persuasion : and yet I have seen professors of all manner of religions started, with the rope's end, by the boatswain's mates, into the church rigged out on the main-deck ; an intolerance and a profanation that ought to prevent those who practise them from affecting indignation at the Inquisition.

I myself served on board a three-decker, with a young clergyman regularly educated at Oxford, a person of good moral character, and that serious yet gentlemanly behaviour that extorted respect. But in the course of a few months, his position began to act vigorously and materially upon his character. With the best intentions in the world, instead of being an organ set apart for the ministry of divine instruction, he rapidly became *one of us*. I solemnly assert, that, to the best of my belief, he never made a man on board a better Chris.

tian; but we made him an excellent sailor. Here was a man, under the most favourable auspices—for our captain was decidedly of a religious turn—who, in spite of himself, became a worse divine, without making any one on board a better man.

For these reasons, and for many others that I could adduce, I do not think that an ordained priest should be one of the requisite persons on board of a ship of war. The union of Church and State, which, as far as my literary abilities and opportunities permitted me, I have always upheld, has very often embarrassed both; let us, however, preserve the principle, but not seek to work it out to minuteness in detail, and raise a cry of “Church and Navy.” The convicted felons in our common gaols have the liberty of conscience in choosing the particular minister who shall administer to them heavenly instruction. If it be physically impossible that seamen afloat should enjoy this privilege, let them enjoy it as often as they come into harbour; but do not compel the

Catholic or the Baptist to make one of an unwilling congregation, from the doctrines of which he conscientiously dissents.

Let the captain and officers not only enforce morality, but also, to the utmost of their power, encourage religion. Let them, by their conduct, inculcate a proper reverence for the Sabbath, mildly and discreetly punish all impious or blasphemous expressions, and if any particular set of men choose to evince their devotion by any public acts, at proper times, the Sunday more especially, they should neither be ridiculed nor reviled, but, as far as the good of the service would permit, properly protected. The captain, who is in general a member of the Established Church, should regularly perform divine service every Sunday, to all of his persuasion, men as well as officers ; but no compulsion ; no driving people, with ropes'-ends, into the temporary church. Invite, entreat, as much as you will, but, I repeat, let there be no compulsion. And now I have said my say.

This talking of chaplains has set me preaching, not vengeance, but, as the saying is, with a vengeance; but, as I don't intend to be thus prosy again, I may be forgiven my digression, and be allowed to plead "benefit of clergy."

The chaplain that the Commodore possessed was a very common sort of person indeed; he was a vulgar man, and decidedly a worldly one. But I am not going to draw this man's character elaborately. I shall merely say that he loved good eating, and, though the most unimaginative of men, believed in ghosts. The latter, in my eyes, was no failing. I believe in them myself—but of this hereafter.

Now, as we wish to get rapidly forward with this part of our story, we will omit all minor details, and bring the reader, with the squadron, at once fast nearing the English coast, in the latter end of February, 17—, the squadron having been now nearly seventeen months on their protracted and pursuing course. Ships were now repeatedly spoken with: and, as might have been expected, from the unre-


mitting exertions of the Commodore, he had headed his chase, and was then between them and their port ; for it was well known that the French would not, after so long an absence from Europe, run through the Gut of Gibraltar.

The Commodore also now heard news to him still more annoying. Two general actions had been fought, in neither of which had he been a participator. This intelligence did not add a little to his exasperation. However, notwithstanding the almost disabled state of his vessels, he was determined to wait for a last chance, and to keep the sea as long as he could, in the chops of the channel, just at the approach of the equinoctial gales. He was determined, if his vessels would hold together long enough, to capture or destroy his enemy yet.

He and Augustus had never been reconciled : and, lately, the Commodore had ceased to manifest the involuntary respect that the youth's irreproachable conduct had extorted. The uncle had become trebly irritated by the

unswerving, cool contempt that his nephew took but little pains to conceal that he entertained for his commander. Tale-bearing, and the insidious whisper of the sycophant, had been doing their noisome work ; so that when the estranged relatives first viewed together, after an absence so long, the deep blue outline of their native land, Sir Octavius was in the worst possible state of mind towards his protégé.

It was the last night in February : the little squadron having made the Land's-end on the previous day, were now lying to, in a strong north-western gale, under close-reefed topsails. It was a clear and cloudless, though moonless night, and bitterly cold ; and this was felt in an increased degree by those who had just passed through the heats of the tropics. At seven bells in the first watch, that is, according to landsman's time, half-past eleven at night, the Commodore came upon deck, followed by the chaplain, and they both ascended to the poop. Sir Octavius, as was his nightly wont, first swept the horizon with his night-glass, counted



his squadron, and attentively marked the position of each vessel, the chaplain standing shivering beside him. This gentleman, having only the safety of souls committed to his care, had not forgotten to cater to the comforts of his own body, and having nothing to do with the temporal preservation of the ship and its mortal contents, had not imposed upon himself those restrictions in his potations, under which the Commodore always laid himself at sea. They had dined together, and, whilst the man of war had contented himself with sipping claret through the long evening, the man of peace had been drinking hot grog. But I would not have it inferred that the latter was tipsy; he was only a little sentimental, and gifted with the double-sight he sometimes possessed of seeing ghosts, or of seeing reasons why they were not to be seen.

After the Commodore had completed his survey, and given some few words of instruction to the officers of the watch, as the ship

was careening over to leeward greatly by the violence of the gale, he clapped his iron hook upon a belaying pin and looked down on the quarter-deck. The lieutenant in charge was walking the weather side, somewhat sheltered by the bulwark ; but to leeward there was one figure, tall, slight, and eminently graceful. It moved slowly, with a measured tread, and, by the faint star-light, the face looked very pale. Ever and anon, the bounding waves would rush down from to windward like a storming host full on the broad and reclined beam of the seventy-four, and then, assailing as if they would surmount her sides, dash themselves into whirling spray, that came in intensely cold and light showers upon the youth, who scarcely noticed them so much as to shake away the moisture of the dripping shower. And still, like a mere automaton, he walked and turned, and turned and walked, apparently impassible to the wind, or the wave, or the heeling of the ship. That youth was the midshipman of the watch, Augustus Astell, and, though he knew

it not, the Earl of Osmondale. In the short space of time that he had been to sea, his two uncles, and their father, had died successively.

As he paced that comfortless, cheerless deck, his heart, his soul, his very thoughts were at home; at that very moment, he was conversing with his mother, and saying to her the sweetest, tenderest things that filial love could prompt, or gladden the maternal heart. And yet, as if conscious of this abstraction from the dismal present, he would rouse himself, as if by an effort, and coming to the break of the quarter-deck, every five minutes, exclaim, in a loud, melodious, yet melancholy voice, "Keep a good look out on the lee-gangway there;" which would be responded to by a chaunt of, "Aye, aye, sir." "A good look out in the lee-bow." "Aye, aye." "A good look out on the weather-bow." "Aye, aye." "A good look out on the weather-gangway." "Aye, aye." And thus the musical, yet almost solemn challenge would go round the

ship. That night, to the Commodore's ears, it sounded like a funeral dirge, and he could not away with the idea that his nephew, as he paced below him, looked like a shadowy being walking in a church-yard, and this impression he communicated to the chaplain, which incontinently caused his teeth to chatter violently. But the Commodore had touched the superstitious divine on the right chord, and off he went in a ghost story.

Now, this particular ghost of the chaplain, as was the case with all his ghost stories, had a vulgar, common-place, raw-head-and-bloody-bones ghost for a hero; a ghost that took a great deal of trouble for no conceivable purpose, and which amused itself with the low-bred amusements of rattling iron chains, overturning chairs and tables, and frightening little children and old women; so, while the chaplain is feeding the curious ear of his commander with his ghost story, we will give the reader ours.

Reader, the person who is now addressing you is an old man ; a very old man ; in sooth, a white-headed old seaman : one who has almost done with the present, who lives only in the past, and trusts only in the future. He has nothing to do with to-day, or yesterday, or many other days of recent birth. He forgets the name of his very good friend who shakes him daily by the hand ; takes off his hat gravely to his great-grand-children in petticoats, and tells them that he will be most happy to receive their commands : and never can perfectly comprehend whether the Reform Bill has passed, is passing, or has passed away. Yet, with this wonderful defection of memory, he—I can remember exactly how Lord Howe looked on the morning of the memorable first of June, and have a perfect recollection of how many diamonds were in the shoe-buckles of his Majesty, George the Third, of pious memory, when he and the queen came on board Lord Duncan's ship, after the action off Camperdown. I

counted them—I was often employed in great things then; but they have put me on the shelf for many a long day. His Majesty's advisers might have done better; but it is of no consequence, for I am a very old man.

It was sixty years ago—nay, it was sixty-one—I had just got my lieutenant's commission—we had no epaulettes then, no gold at all about our persons, except when we cashed a bill, or eased a Spanish treasure-ship of her doubloons; but yet, I was as proud of my white facings as any lieutenant of the present day can be of the bunch of bullion on his shoulder. Our frigate had been refitting in English Harbour in Antigua; it is a sad hot hole, that English Harbour, where you are steamed all day from a salt-marsh close by, and cooled all night from the chill winds, that come like the icy fingers of consumption over your body; so the yellow monster came on board, and began to play his devilish pranks. Then we up anchor, and ran round to the more open

roadstead of St. John's; but those poor fellows with whom the disease had been dallying could not shake him off; for, though no more sickened there, yet all who had sickened, died.

On the third night after we had reached our breezy anchorage, of all the contaminated, only one remained living—quick work, there, gossips—and he was a sweet youth, a playful little cherub, some twelve years old—an idol, a pet; and they had slung his cot in the coolest spot of the captain's cabin: and sometimes the surgeon thought he would recover, and sometimes not. He had hitherto borne all his sufferings like a little hero—or a martyr for the truth; but on this night he grew restless, and wanted his mother, and his little sister—poor fellow!—well, we won't talk about that.

Now, he came of a lordly race, and his mother was a great lady: and when the dying boy called for her and his little sister, the mother was asleep in England in her canopied bed, and heard him not; but his innocent little sister

did. How do I know that? You shall hear by-and-bye.

It was not twelve o'clock—but it was not far from it—when I descried, from the quarter-deck, walking over the smooth water, at a very rapid pace—a noble and matronly figure, clad in a night dress; and, without seeming to notice anything, it passed directly in at the cabin windows, and then I distinctly heard, from where I stood, a chuckle of joy, and a faint cry of “thank you,” and the death-rattle, all mingled together. And so I knew the lad was dead, and that he could not die until his mother had come to bless him. When I and the doctor went down into the cabin, he *was* dead, with a smile upon his countenance, and his arms extended as if he had recently held some one in his embrace.

I did not say anything then; but next morning in the broad sun-light—it is best to talk of those things in the sunshine—I said to the surgeon, “Frank,” hesitating a little, “did

you a—a—see anything particular over the stern last night, just before the Honourable Mr. Mowbray died ?”

“ No,” said he, “ did you ?”

But I put him off with some subterfuge, and held my tongue altogether about the spirit, and in due time we came to England again ; but when we were there, no one liked either to write, or go and personally inform the fond parents of the loss that they had sustained six months before. So I volunteered to do the dismal office. People were severe, for many mistook my motive : they thought that I wished to get introduced into a noble family, and other dishonest things ; but I only wanted to know if the countess knew of her soul being absent from her own body.

I was a well-favoured youth then, and had a winning way with me, and a soft and tuneful voice, and could stealthily get hold of a lady’s hand, and wheedle the heart out of her, without either she or I ever thinking about love.

So I ran up from Chatham to London, with a letter of introduction from the captain, to tell a doating mother that her favourite child was dead.

I did not torture the noble matron with a nicely-graduated scale of anguish up to the fatal climax: in a few quivering words I told her the worst, and then sat down and wept beside her. My unfeigned grief, even in the midst of her own, caught her attention—she wrung my hand, and left the room. Her lord came to me shortly afterwards, and grieving as a man ought to grieve, entreated of me to sojourn with them; this was what I wanted. Of course, I led the conversation as delicately as I could to the subject most at my heart, by recapitulating the praises of the dear youth; and I soon discovered that she was insensible of the happiness she had conveyed to her dying son. Till she saw me, she had not a presentiment of his death.

I staid, contrary to etiquette, a week with

this noble family; but at length I was recalled to my duty by a letter from my captain. I had taken a friendly, nay, more than a friendly, an affectionate leave of my noble host and hostess, when, as I lingered at the threshold of the door of the drawing-room, I asked permission to step up into the nursery to give one kiss of farewell to their pretty little daughter; for I began to think, that my heated imagination had made fools of my eyes, in persuading them that they saw a spirit upon the waters, when the poor little boy was in the agonies of death. Moreover, I now remembered me, that I had no distinct recollection of the features of the passing vision, though my general impression was, that they were wan and beautiful. Now the Lady Mowbray's features were beautiful, but not wan; and as far as the countenance was concerned, I found no identity between the features of the countess and those of the apparition, that had so much bewildered me at the moment, and so long preyed upon my hours of solitude.

To my request to see the little Adelaide, an offer was made to send for her down; but on my saying that I wished to see her surrounded by her little *manège* in the nursery, and that I wished to listen to her prattle for a few minutes, I was shown up stairs.

She was a fair and intelligent little creature, of a cheerful temper, yet subject to occasional fits of pensiveness. I had seen her several times before, for some brief minutes, when she made her appearance in the evening; on these occasions she would always sidle up to me, evincing one of those sudden attachments that often occur to children of acute sensibility. This was not noticed by her parents, absorbed either in their recent loss, or distracted perhaps from attending much to the actions of their youngest child, for there were many blooming sons and daughters around their board.

I took the child on my knee. She was, I should suppose, just entering upon her seventh year; and was evidently a very precocious spe-

cimen of beautified—for the most elaborate tuition had *beautified* her natural loveliness—of beautified humanity.

“ Pretty little Adelaide, I have come to say good-bye to you—kiss me.”

“ There—I’m sorry—good people come and love me, and always go away ; naughty people stay.”

“ I am glad you love me, dearest ; but why should you love me so much ? I am almost a stranger to you.”

“ Oh, but I do though—you were so kind to brother.”

“ How do you know that, my little fairy ?”

“ I saw it, I saw it ; and I saw it most that night ; the night I could not wake mamma.”

This innocent avowal made me tremble excessively, and the perspiration hung upon my forehead.

“ O tell me, sweetest, dearest, all about that night.”

“ But may I ?”

“ Yes, surcly ; but why do you say, ‘ may I ? ’ ”

“ Because I wanted to tell Miss Broadling, our governess ; and I did tell her a little ; but she told me to be quiet, that it was a silly dream—but that I must not frighten myself, and that I must try to forget it ; but I can’t forget it much, and I’m sure it was not a dream.”

“ How I should like to hear that dream ! ”

“ And I should like to tell it to you—to you only—for I saw you in it, and knew you the moment that I saw you again.”

“ Well, that is wonderful ! Now for the dream, my little lady ? ”

“ Oh, but it wasn’t one dream, but two, three, four—and it used to be so ; when I went to bed, I didn’t sleep like, and yet I shut my eyes ; and as mamma always told me to say, just before I shut my eyes, ‘ Watch over me, good God, while I sleep,’ that was always after the regular prayers at my bedside, you know.

Well, when I had shut my eyes, and said, ‘ Watch over me, good God, while I sleep,’ the bed and the room used to seem as if they were swimming about ; and then, you know, brother’s voice used to come to me gently, so gently, and say, ‘ Aidee, Aidee, I want you ;’ and then I used to open my eyes, and I used ; to see him in a very strange place indeed, and good people about him ; and you were always there, and brother looked so ill ; and he said he wanted mamma ; and then he thanked me for coming so far, so very far, to see him : and yet he seemed to know that I was lying in bed close to mamma in this very house ; for he asked me to wake her, and send her to him. And I tried to wake her, and I tried to hallo out, and I couldn’t loud enough ; and to shake her, but I couldn’t do that ; and then I cried, because I couldn’t ; and I thought I should break my heart, because I could not send her to dear brother, who was dying so far off.”

“ But, my little beauty, this was all what people call the nightmare.”

“ So governess said, when I told her my first dream : and I didn’t tell her the others, because she scolded me, so I held my tongue about them, as she bade me. These nightmares are very funny, to make you see *real*, right earnest people, such a long way off ; but they are very horrid.”

“ So they are, my little love ; but I should like to hear about the other three nightmares too.”

“ Oh, they were all a good deal like the first, except the last ; but brother grew more and more vexed, because I could not wake mamma, and send her to him ; and yet, poor brother saw that I tried all I could ; and he looked iller and iller every moment ; and I think he said, ‘ that mamma’—but you will never tell, will you ?”

“ No, no, no.”

“ ‘ That mamma couldn’t come, because she

had not reconciled her soul to God, before she went to sleep.' Yes, those were his very words. Oh, how vexed I was, and how much I was afraid of going to bed !”

“ My poor girl !”

I have never since omitted my nightly prayers.

“ Well, the night before the last nightmare, what do you think I did ? All these goings to my brother seemed to make me grow quite old, and very sensible indeed, and put cunning things into my head, that I should never have thought of before. So, when I kneeled down by my bedside, and Miss Broadling began to read the prayers, instead of following her, I mumbled out the whole history of the ‘ Death of Little Cock-robin ;’ and when we had done, she took her spectacles off, put me to bed, tucked me up, and kissed me, and said I was a very good girl for saying my prayers so perfectly ; and then bade me good night. I do think she is a little deaf, as well as near-sighted—don’t you ?”

“ I should think so, my love ; but you only mumbled, you know.”

“ At first ; but she read very fast. I knew she wanted to go and finish a long letter to Mr. Julius Casimer, our chaplain, for they had had a quarrel, so she read very fast indeed, and that made me speak loud, when I was forced to speak fast too ; and when she came to the ‘ power and the glory, for ever and ever, amen,’ my voice was quite as fast, and a good deal louder than hers, when I said, ‘ and all the little birds they fell sighing and sobbing, because of the death of poor little cock-robin.’”

“ Well, dear, and so I suppose your dream did not take you to see your brother that night ?”

“ Yes, but it did though ; and mamma went too.”

I felt sick with superstitious alarm.

“ Well, I didn’t go to sleep, you may suppose, and I didn’t say my little prayer to God before I shut my eyes, for I wouldn’t shut

my eyes at all : O, it was so long before mamma came to bed, and I was afraid William would die first. At last mamma came ; I was so glad. Well, I waited till mamma had put her night-things all on, and then I said, ‘ Mamma, I’ve been a very naughty little girl indeed, I have not said one word of my prayers to-night, not one word.’ And she was very angry, and began to scold Miss Broadling ; but I told her, I had been racing cock-robin against them, and that governess could not hear my words. So good mamma scolded me a little, and laughed a little. And mamma was going to jump into bed, when I said, ‘ Dear mamma, I can’t go to sleep till I’ve said my prayers ; do, mamma, read them for me ; the prayer-book lies on the dressing-table. And I jumped out of bed, and she took me in her arms, and kissed me so much, and said I was a dear something, I don’t know what, that reminded her of neglected duties. And we knelt down together, and mamma read the prayers, not like governess, but so slow

and so solemn, whilst the tears ran down her cheeks all the while ; and I said them after her, every single word, and they seemed to be beautiful, and so full of love. And we got into bed, and mamma seemed unhappy, and she sobbed a great deal, and that made me cry too ; and so then mamma tried to leave off, and I said to her, ‘ Mamma, we shall go to sleep so nice, if we both say together our last little prayer ; and she kissed me again, and we said both of us, almost as if it were with the same lips, ‘ Watch over me, good God, whilst I sleep ;’ and mamma was off sound in one minute, with my arms round her neck, and I was dreaming again in two.”

“ You little angel !” said I, kissing her passionately, with my eyes full of tears ; “ and then—”

“ The nightmare took me to the same place, and poor dear brother was much worse ; but he was so, so glad to see me, and told me that God would love me for ever, and that he loved me,

and that, though I should never see him again, he would watch over me as long as I lived, and that my lot should be happy among women; ‘And now farewell,’ said he, ‘dear Aidee, till we meet where there is no parting; and now, my dear little sister, wake mamma.’ And though I was so many, many miles off, I found that I was still in mamma’s arms. So I first kissed away the tears that were still standing on her cheek, and whispered in her ear, ‘Mamma, get up; brother William is very ill, and wants to kiss you.’ So mamma got up at once, and went straight out through the wall; and then my nightmare ended, and I fell into a real sound sleep. But I never knew that William died till you came and told us.”

“And did mamma not go out of bed?”

“I don’t think she did—not even, like me, in the nightmare; for next morning I could not help saying, ‘Mamma, did you get out of bed at all last night?’ ‘No, my sweetest love,’ she said, ‘I had the most blessed rest I ever enjoyed,

and I owe it to you, dear Aidee;' and so I said, 'Didn't you dream at all, mamma?' and she told me no, but that she had all night a consciousness of a heavenly existence. I think those were her very words, though I don't understand them so well."

When she had finished, I drew her closely to my breast, explained to her how very fantastical and curious dreams sometimes are, and that her mother not being conscious of anything that was supposed to have happened to both of them, was a sufficient proof that everything that she fancied she saw was merely ideal. I praised the discretion of the governess in telling her never to speak of it again, and I told her to forget it as fast as she could; and then I took a tender leave of her, fully impressed with the truth of Hamlet's remark,

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy;"

and that I had veritably seen the ghost of a living being, in which belief, I have lived unshaken, and in which belief I shall die.

But, perhaps, not the least singular part of this mysterious affair was this, that when I again saw the Honourable Miss Adelaide Mowbray, at the age of fourteen, though she had some slight remembrance of myself, and a little of her brother, she had totally forgotten our conversation in the school-room and everything about the dream; but the promise made to her by her brother in it was verified to the very letter. I have outlived her a few years—alas! whom have I not outlived?—but she was, indeed, blessed among women—blessed in every relation of life, as a wife, mother, friend; always fortunate, enjoying all her days uninterrupted health, and her death was so gentle and so serene, that it might well be termed a mere passing away into glory.

That is my ghost story—mine—the old author-mariner's. It may seem frivolous, simple, childish; a developement of supernatural means for no effectual purpose. All that I can say is, that it is true; and that, foolish as it may

appear, it may have worked out, by miraculous goodness, the safety of three souls.

Let the reader suppose that, whilst I have been telling him my ghost story, the chaplain was frightening himself by repeating his to the Commodore. Had I been writing fiction, I might easily have placed my own narration in the mouth of this divine, and thus have preserved the unity of my story; but, as he was too like the generality of our acquaintance, whose only speeches of their own invention that are at all acceptable are those in which they intimate their intention of taking leave, it would have been as absurd as the writing an accompaniment of Italian music to the grunting of a cholic-stricken pig.

However, his efforts seemed so well to please the old Commodore, and the horrific and supernatural were just then so consonant to the state of his breast, that he did what he was but seldom in the habit of doing, he disburthened himself of the thoughts that were oppressive to his

mind, in a confidential speech to his companion, who started with terror every moment, as with the harsh tones of Sir Octavius, the unearthly sounds that arose from the face of the angry waters came so closely intermingled, that the listener thought that more than one voice was speaking to him.

“I’ll tell ye what it is, master parson,” said the Commodore; “but hold on stoutly, man, or ye’ll lurch to leeward like spilt grog. I’ll tell ye what it is, and clap it up in your breast as a secret. Mind ye, there’s no one listening, if listeners could hear, but ourselves, in this damndest, unluckiest of all gales.”

“Don’t swear, Sir Octavius; pray don’t swear just now. No one may hear, but many may speak; as I live, I heard half-a-dozen voices mocking you, as you swore, on the star-board quarter. Let us go and talk in the cabin.”

“Nonsense, balderdash: hold on, and we are very well here. Look out! here comes a surge

that will shake the old ship's timbers for her—there!" And it came truly enough, and the vessel heeled to it as if she would overturn, and, in a moment, in spite of his divinity, the chaplain was bundled up in the lee-scutters: the Commodore, with his iron fin, was hooked on like a bat, and he defied lee-lurches and weather-rolls. "Here," he continued, without a moment's interruption in his speech, "two of the afterguard, pick up the chaplain, and hand him over to windward." When the bruised and terrified chaplain was again placed alongside of his commander, the latter, without asking if he were hurt, went on thus: "Why didn't you hold on? However, you took your choice, and its consequences: I wish ye joy of both. We can talk here as well as in the cabin; besides, I wish to see how the old ship behaves—labours dreadfully, don't she?"

"Oh! this is dreadful!"

"What is dreadful? I see nothing dreadful about the business. Everything is proper and

natural, and shipshape fashion; perhaps you think that she'd labour less, if I clapped the main trysail on her—no such thing. I dare say she is making a great deal of water; but, as the pumps are now rigged, we can easily keep her afloat."

"Worse and worse! Do you know, in the crash of that horrible wave that knocked me down, I distinctly heard a human shriek, that seemed to issue from its bosom; and, as I lay crushed on the other side, I saw a parcel of fiery stars dancing all round me."

"Nonsense! The blast, as it howls, will make strange noises at times; and, as to the stars, it's only a pair of black eyes for you to-morrow. But, concerning those ghosts that you were palavering about, I won't talk of them in the cabin. I can't take my eyes—(he never said eye, though he had but one,)—off that lad," pointing to his nephew, who was still urging his solemn walk amidst the roaring of the tempest. "He looks to me for all the world like a ghost. I wish to God I had never brought him to sea; he will be my

curse and my fate yet. Now, as to ghosts, master parson, I won't say that there are any, nor that there are not any, for as yet I have never seen one, though I have seen many who say they have; but as sure as ships steer by the needle, if any ill comes to that lad, I shall be haunted by a spirit, and a horrible one too. Closer to me, sir, and don't stand shaking there, like a jelly in the hand of a young girl, but attend. I took that boy from his mother's arms, almost by physical force; and, as we parted, she went down on her knees before me, and most solemnly exclaimed, 'If any ill come to my son and to your nephew, I take the living God to witness, the God of the fatherless and the widow, I will lay it at your door; and reproach shall be in your ear and on your heart for ever, even though no blame can attach to you; for have you not wilfully brought this awful responsibility on your head?' and here she looked like an angel, with the eyes of a lioness. 'If, through you, he be lost to me, living I will

chase you through the world with my curses, and, when I am dead, my spirit shall haunt you into madness. The grave shall not hold me; I will burst away from the throne of mercy to torture you. The unconquerable will, like the soul, can never die. If, when again you stand before me, and I say unto you, give me my son, and you cannot, your sister will curse you, woe and misery shall crush you, and your grey hairs shall be dishonoured before the multitude—even the low shall spurn you!”

“This is terrible; I would not have that youth on my hands for the universe.”

“I was a fool—an obstinate fool, and I repent me bitterly. In a few weeks, perhaps days, I shall be able to send him home; but God knows what may happen in that time. I have done what I could; bear witness to it: he is stationed at the after-guns on the lower deck, where the timbers are the strongest, and, in action, the shot the least frequent; yet the boy thinks and acts as if I loved him not. If

either of us are to fall, may I fall before him. But hark ! it is midnight—they are striking eight bells.”

The carpenter came, and reported seven feet water in the pump-well. The larboard watch was called, and the starboard watch was kept on deck to assist the relieving watch at the chain-pumps, that had been kept rigged throughout the gale, and they set to work spell and spell.

It is a dismal noise in the dark night, that discordant clank, clank, clank, of the chain-pumps—the burst of the gale cannot drown it ; it is heard above the roar of the waters, and there is something dreadful in the thought, that the enemy is stealing into the citadel secretly. Thus the Commodore had another accompaniment of dismal sounds to his discourse, which he still continued to hold with the terrified and unwilling clergyman.

The Commodore thus continued, at intervals, between receiving the various reports as to the state of the ship, and the position of those

ships of the squadron that were in sight, still hanging on tenaciously by the belaying pin. “So, sir, it is my firm belief, should this boy die, the peace of my life would be gone for ever—she would be dreadful to me living—most horrible to me dead; if any lady could burst the cerements of a sepulchre, it is my sister Agnes. So mind ye me—as I don’t intend to talk about this any more, and the boy should die, and a night or two after, you should find me stark dead in my cot, with my features twisted a little awry or so, you’ll know that *she* has been with me, and be silent.”

“For God’s sake, Sir Octavius, no more; let me retire—I am quite overcome.”

“No, stay; one bell will strike soon, and then Mr. Astell will be relieved. I have kept you here a good deal on his account. When you see the next midshipman relieve him, you’ll go up to him, and take him into your cabin, and give him something cordial, for the poor fellow is very wet, and I dare say you have

some little savoury morsel by you that he could eat; and don't hurry him, and talk to him prosy, admonitory stuff, my learned sir. Say to him kindly, in general terms, how grateful it is in youth to be submissive to the aged; how ill proud defiance sits upon a young brow; tell him, do ye mark me, that every time a sinner, for we are all sinners, allows the sun to go down upon his wrath, that his defence will be more difficult on the day of judgment. Say to him, that in canvassing the acts of their superiors, very young persons should remember that the apparently expedient wrong may be really justice; but mark you me," (a favourite expression,) "let no mention, or even insinuation, of my name appear; and you may just tell him, that whilst the young have attachments, the old, also, may happen to have their affections. Now, good night! Here, you Joseph Cummins, assist the chaplain down the poop-ladder; make haste, or the youngster will have left the deck." And when the divine was out of hearing, he

continued, shaking his head woefully, “Ah, I fear me, you are but a fool, after all—three parts fool and one part glutton; I fear me that notwithstanding the cramming you got at college, I have crammed you to-night but to little purpose. However, if he cannot give the lad good advice, he will a good supper, and that will be something.”

It was not till the faint dawn of the morning had appeared, that the Commodore left the poop; but during these many hours he spoke to no one, but continued now pacing the deck in much perturbation of mind, now hanging on to the weather-bulwark in bitter abstraction. The man was not content with himself.

CHAPTER V.

“Ira, furor brevis est.

The truth of which we oft must test,

E'en from those that we love best ;

Therefore we should pardon them,

And mildly all their wrath endure,

Nor try, by anger, rage to cure,

And thus, in madness, harden them.”

SENSIBLE SAM.

I AM just approaching the first catastrophe. Indignation is a feeling that now seldom trembles along my nerves. I can feel pity, and contempt, and regret, yet, with me, they are no longer passions, but sensations. And yet, when I remember the said falling off of my respectable and very redoubtable hero, the fires of youth blaze up fitfully in my bosom, and I shudder whilst I record.

Ten days after the Commodore had crammed the chaplain with excellent advice, on the twenty-

seventh of March—yes, it was the twenty-seventh,—after four-and-twenty hours of deep fog, not far from the Race of Alderney, the long-pursued French squadron was discovered close in shore, on the Norman coast, with Cherbourg under its lee—SAFE.

As the mist slowly folded up its fleecy curtains, and ship after ship appeared with the hated tricolor streaming to the wind, the surgeon was sent for on the poop, for it was thought that Sir Octavius had been struck with an apoplectic fit, his features were so fixed, his position so motionless, his single eye so bloodshot, and the veins in his temples and forehead so turgid. When the surgeon approached him, and endeavoured to possess himself of his wrist, in order to feel his pulse, he flung him from him with violence, and exclaimed, “I am not ill, but mad.” And of a verity he was so. Master, pilot, signal officers, and men, all fell under his rage. The sight before him was certainly sufficient to try the

philosophy of a much calmer and better regulated mind than that of the old Commodore. As the enemy's force, now increased by another line of battle ship, stood in under easy sail, between them and the shore, was crowded together a perfect fleet of captured English West-Indiamen. As the French ships-of-war ran along shore, they hauled more and more to the wind, approaching in idle bravado within gunshot of the English squadron, well knowing that it would have been insanity on the part of the Commodore to have engaged them with half a gale of wind blowing dead on the shore, lined with ranges of terrible batteries.

When the French men-of-war had got directly opposite the harbour's mouth, they hove to, and the English had the mortification of seeing merchant ship after merchant ship, the French colours flying over the English, file into Cherbourg, gradually disappearing behind that enormous fort, Pelecé. These operations seemed lengthened out purposely, in order to prolong

the torture of the old Commodore. It was dangerous to approach him; he raved, he swore—how terrible he swore! Certainly, at that hour, he should have been relieved from his command. He was in that state in which Henry the Eighth has been described to have been in by his historians during his last illness, and before any one had dared to tell him that *it was his last*.

Evening was coming on, and both fleets were drawing into the harbour's mouth; and, as the flood-tide would soon set in strongly, it became a matter of absolute necessity for the English squadron to make sail and get a good offing before dark. At the time, when it was already dusk, and the numerous fishing-boats were running in unnoticed between the two threatening fleets, orders were given to make sail, and the carpenter ordered to rig the gratings at the same time. The Commodore, not knowing how to contain his wrath, chose to work the ship himself. Never was the duty performed more in-

stantaneously, never more accurately. But Sir Octavius saw in everything disobedience of orders, mutiny, and rebellion. No sooner were the weather-braces hauled taut, and the ropes coiled down, than he put three of his lieutenants and his master under arrest, broke half-a-dozen of his petty officers, and then sending for his boatswain, went into his cabin, and flogged two of his midshipmen.

From thence, he repaired to the gangway and flogged every man on the black list, and every man against whom a fault could be imagined. Am I relating an extravagant fiction? Am I even drawing an overcharged picture? Alas! for poor human nature! Go read the records of the times. What my hero did under the worst of exasperations, in comparative moderation, other gallant officers have done in sport and mockery; for who does not know, that is at all acquainted with naval matters, of the boast of a gallant captain, who, when he went on shore, used to say that he had left his

ship's company the happiest set of men alive, for he had just flogged one half of them, (hundreds of men,) and they were happy it was over, and the other half were equally happy that they were not to catch it till next day. If, notwithstanding the dictates of morality, the denunciations of religion, and the march of refinement, there be a process by which men are to be made Caligulas, Caligulas will surely be made. Alas, for dreadful human nature! Now, however, we may thank God that this machinery, working unto evil, of which arbitrary power was the momentum, exists no longer in the navy.

But our dear old hero did not act thus passionately and thus cruelly with impunity. He had certain dreadful twinges of conscience, combined with other checks still more annoying. His nephew, silly boy that he was, from time to time, cast upon him all manner of looks, from pity up to indignation; the very worst method that the young and high-spirited moralist could have adopted. Even whilst the

Commodore was inflicting the lash upon his men, some one whispered distinctly into his ear, "Coward and tyrant!" but when he looked round every one seemed occupied by the unpleasant duty then going on, though young Astell stood most suspiciously near to his infuriated uncle.

The last man had been flogged, and the hands piped down, but the wrath of Sir Octavius neither pipe nor tabor could allay, and his one eye scowled fearfully around for other objects to make as miserable as himself; and now, for the first time, his bosom burned to fix a quarrel openly on his nephew; he had read his looks, and gave him full credit for the accusing whisper. There was the victim close to him, but, as yet, there were no sticks with which to make the sacrificial fire. For a few fatal moments he forgot that he had a sister.

I am sure that God generally punishes us most by granting us our wicked wishes, and that the devil has always a large assortment of our

favourite sins at hand, all ticketed, with nice new names, to clap into our fists the moment that we ask for them. Do we want revenge? there it is for us—only ask and have, called justice,—hate, contempt of wickedness, &c. &c.

“ Oh ! that I had a specious opportunity of venting my wrath on that proud young contemner of my weakness,” thought Sir Oliver.

“ My dear, dispassionate, kind-hearted sir,” said Beelzebub, “ do not call things by their wrong names. Wrath, indeed ! you only want to vindicate your legal authority ; permit me to hand you over the opportunity. Don’t you remember, ~~that~~, about a couple of nights since, the worthy ~~chaplain~~ hinted to you that Mr. Astell’s hammock-man was drunk, and that the young gentleman, who must have known it, never reported him.”

Now, ~~the~~ Commodore didn’t know that the devil was doing all this, but he thought that he was acting on the suggestions of his own good sense ; so he stopped, started, and cried,—

“Hah!” quite terrifically, “come here, Mr. Astell,—come here, sir. Do you know that I would as soon flog you, sir, if you deserved it, as I just have Mr. Thompson and Mr. Johnson, notwithstanding your lady mother and your sanctified looks?”

“I hope not, sir; I trust that you would not think that I deserved it, and if you did think that I did, that you would not do it.”

“I would, by G—d! and now, sir, mark you me!—speak the truth.”

“We do not lie, Sir Octavius, in our family.”

“Was, or was not, John Sunninghill, your hammock-man, drunk on the evening before last?”

“He was drunk, Sir Octavius.”

“And you screened him, sir?”

“Pardon me, sir; I did not screen him, I only did not report him.”

“And why, sir—answer, why?”

“Truly and frankly, Sir Octavius?”

“ Aye, sir, truly and frankly ; do you think I fear truth and frankness ? ”

“ Because he is the son of one of my mother’s tenants, and followed me to sea through affection—because I promised, solemnly promised, his mother and mine to be kind to him—and, because I knew that the punishment would far exceed the offence.”

“ You did, aye ? Do you not know that you yourself have committed an offence—a very great offence—in not reporting drunkenness ? ”

“ If you think so, sir, I am ready, willingly, to undergo a suitable punishment for it ; that is, such a one as a gentleman should inflict upon a gentleman. I thought——”

“ I think and I thought ! what the devil do you mean ? Pray, sir, who gave you leave to think ? ”

This was formerly a favourite expression from a superior to an inferior officer.

“ The great God that gave you leave to breathe.”

“Dare you tell me this to my face?—insolent puppy!”

“Uncle, this violence——”

“Uncle me no uncles — there’s no such word in the articles of war. Under that broad pennant, sir, there’s no other relation between us than that which demands of you the extremest subordination. It would serve you right if I flogged you as I have just done your messmates.”

Now I am not sure whether the devil did not serve the nephew the same trick that he had served the uncle; for no sooner had young Astell said to himself, “If it were not foolishly tempting a wild man’s anger, and a forgetting a respect that ought always to be paid to authority ——”

“What do you mean,” said the satanic deceiver, “by calling things by wrong names? It is all a proper pride, and a noble spirit,—just dare him to flog you.”

“You would never flog *me*,” said the boy,

tossing up his head, proudly ; “ because, sir, the attempt would disgrace you, and disgrace me ; and because that attempt you dare not make.”

“ Darn’t !—by the living G—d ! ‘Then by that sacred name, I swear, if you and I are permitted to breathe another hour, I will flog you even if you were twenty times my nephew,—twenty, a hundred times, my son. Down to your berth, sir ; the oath is recorded—you are a prisoner until the punishment is inflicted ; another word and the manacles shall be on your hands.”

The poor Augustus went below almost stupefied. He had heard his death-warrant—now he pretended to no fortitude, he despaired, and he confessed it. He could not even act the Christian ; he could not forgive his uncle. But there was dreadful calmness in his despair ; his messmates offered him spirits and water, but he would take nothing. He merely asked for a sheet of paper, on which he wrote these few words.

“MOTHER,

“When you see this, go and demand from your brother your murdered son. I am praying to God to bless you.

“AUGUSTUS ASTELL.”

He then wept so passionately, that the writing on the paper, had it not been removed from before him, would have been totally obliterated. Then there came a rumour into the berth that the master-at-arms was coming for him, and then he dried up his tears hastily, and sealed the letter. He then turned to one of his messmates and said, “Danvers, the tyrant shall never flog me. I will try him to the last moment. If anything should happen to me, convey with your own hand this letter to Lady Astell; you may tell her that I never disgraced her; and now, in the will of God be the issue.” He then shook hands with all of them, bidding them tenderly farewell, and followed the master-at-arms into the presence of his commander into the cabin.

The Commodore's countenance was more darkly stern than before; two or three of the officers were with him, and the chaplain also. The boatswain stood ready with the cat, and the quarter-master with the seizings. The officers had been interceding, but injudiciously, with him; and when nephew and uncle met face to face, the latter only said, with a hoarse voice, "Strip."

I could not write, for very tears, the pathetic pleadings of the poor boy to his uncle; all his pride had given way; he offered every atonement, every humiliation, even to the going down on his knees and asking pardon for his contumacy; but the Commodore only gnashed out from between his teeth, "My oath, my oath."

Every one in the cabin was weeping but the relatives; even the gruff old boatswain, who had not shed a tear since the last of his little ones had died, and those tears grudgingly, was dashing his right hand across his eyes, and

meditating in his mind something but little short of mutiny.

Where then was Mr. Underdown, that good man, that beneficent genius to this devoted family, that mild mentor, that held in his hands the heartstrings of the too often brutal Commodore—where was he? Strange, but doubtless wise dispensation. He was sitting, pale, but with fast returning health, in subdued but rapt contemplation of the dignified beauty of the mother of the child that was crouching before her brother, and rallying all his energies to the commission of a dreadful crime—a crime the more horrid, as it is against the fountain of nature, and the only one in the long and dire catalogue of mortal sins that gives the sinner no time for repentance, no pause to utter the pleadings for mercy. Yes, at that very moment Lady Astell was sitting in her splendid drawing-room, in gentle converse with her former humble lover, now her fast friend, and they were talking

of him—her son—her only theme. The violence of her grief at the loss of her relatives had subsided, and, with all a mother's pride, she was glorying that the earldom of Osmondale had found so noble a representative; and that earl—mockery of mockeries—was about to be lashed like a felon, exposed, degraded upon the gun. Could the mother have seen this, she would have died upon the spot.

We must go on with the repellent scene in the fore-cabin of the Terrific. Poor Augustus, when he found that violent hands were to be laid upon his person, drew himself suddenly up, and his whole countenance became pale as his forehead, and whiter than the purest marble was the whiteness of that high and expansive forehead. The youth had enshrined despair upon it; he had thrown aside the suppliant, and become the martyr.

“Uncle!” said he, in a very low but in a most distinct tone of voice, “you have recorded your oath. I have also made my resolution.”

But, before you inflict an irredeemable disgrace upon the representative of two noble houses—”

“No disgrace, young mutineer.”

“Uncle, you are doubly disgraced in saying so. Aye—hear me; for it may be the last time, and this the last request that I may ever deign to make of you. Only, I conjure you, before I am seized up, by the solemn promise that you have made my mother, to permit me to say a few words to you in private in the after-cabin. Surely this is not granting too much for the playfellow of your daughter.”

“’Tis no use, Gus—Augus—Mr. Astell, I mean. I will hear you; but I must flog you, by G—d.” And here I must say, in justice to him, that the wicked old man trembled all over, and looked round piteously upon all those assembled in the cabin. They were good, and feeling, and brave, but dull men; had any one of them then forcibly plucked the victim from the fangs of his destroyer, the old Commodore would have blessed the humane act

of mutiny, and ever after loved the mutineer.

At the close of Sir Octavius's short speech, the chaplain ran, and obsequiously flung open the door of the after-cabin. Ennobled as it were by some heroic purpose, the pallid youth took precedence of his commander, and lordlily stalked into the cabin before him. The Commodore followed him in silence, and, we must say, in dismay. When they were alone together, Augustus calmly closed the door after them; he then faced his uncle emphatically, and quietly said, "Uncle, do you believe in the superintendence of a divine Providence?"

"Why this to me, boy? Come, your request. There are those rascally Frenchmen hauling round the point; by all my forefathers, they are within half-gun shot. Your request, your request; no prating about Providence."

We must now shortly recur to the position of the two squadrons. The French were creeping along shore, upon which the wind was

blowing, but from a quarter that permitted them to lay their course with at least a couple of points to spare. The English squadron had been sailing upon a parallel line until they both approached Fort Pelée, when the Commodore was forced to haul a little off the shore—at least the other ships; but, with an unconquerable hankering after a slap at them, he had caused the Terrific to be kept much to leeward of the rest of the ships. Thus, when about to round the point to enter the roadstead of Cherbourg, the French being obliged to haul their wind a little, they necessarily forged a-head towards the old Commodore's ship; and then, when each Frenchman had weathered the shoal water, and was rounding off again to sail large into the harbour, he gave the Terrific his fire in succession, not in broadsides, but, with the utmost deliberation, gun by gun. No sooner had the first shot been fired, which rattled sufficiently close to the cabin windows, than the old gentleman, opening the door of the after-cabin, said quietly to the

first lieutenant, who was in the fore-cabin waiting for orders, "Mr. Alsop, set all sail that the craft will bear, and keep a continual fire upon the enemy. Let the discharges be as rapid as possible, so as to cover us with our smoke. Send the very best men to the wheel, and keep her full and by."

Having thus given his orders, he retired to the after-cabin with the most perfect coolness, and from thence into the stern-gallery, from whence, the Terrific's head being still more hauled off shore, he had an excellent and a most irritating view of the escaping squadron.

This little brouillerie made noise enough while it lasted, which was not more than ten minutes, during which time the angry old man kept pacing his stern-walk, and shaping his mind into feelings still more angry and vindictive; now giving one oath to the tricolors, as they disappeared behind Fort Pelée, and now another to what he was pleased to call his mutinous and rebellious nephew, who was seated alone in the

after-cabin. in which there were no guns. The man of wrath eyed first one, and then the other, with a most malignant expression.

Poor Augustus, with his arm upon the table and his head reclining on his hand, sat in a mournful abstraction. He heard not, or at least regarded not, the roar of the artillery, and when a shot from one of the enemy's ships passed through the cabin, crashing the ship's sides, he neither noticed it by any exclamation nor altered his position. This useless firing soon ceased on both sides. The first lieutenant came and reported this to the Commodore, which he knew well enough. He received the orders to secure the guns, and beat the retreat. After this, the uncle again approached his nephew, who stood up to receive him as he stepped in from his stern-walk. The Commodore's countenance was darker, more demoniac than ever. He began addressing Augustus by swearing a terrible oath, which was interrupted by Mr. Alsop again appearing, and announcing that

the guns were secured, and that the ship was well off from the land.

“And pray, sir, what damage have these cowardly, skulking French reprobates done us?”

“Hulled us three times, Sir Octavius, shot away the main-spring stay, and damaged the running rigging a little.”

“Wounded any spars?”

“None, Sir Octavius.”

“Thank God! There is an especial Providence that watches over the interests of religion and loyalty. These regicide French can do nothing against his Britannic Majesty, God bless him!”

“But, Sir Octavius, I am sorry to acquaint you, that one man is killed outright, and five wounded grievously.”

“Mere casualties of war—the spars are safe.”

“May we pipe to grog, Sir Octavius?”

“No, sir, not until I have settled my little affair with that young, sulky scoundrel,” mean-

ing, by these polite epithets, his nephew, who made the third person in the after-cabin. The first lieutenant stood for some moments motionless, yet anxious as to what next might ensue, whilst the Commodore paced athwart and athwart, now his weather-beaten face as pale as it could be with concentrated passion, now all his ferocity on the verge of breaking out into maniac rage. At length, he broke forth thus:

“Mark you me, Mr. Alsop, mark you me. We have done our duty, sir; and yet, after chasing them half round the world, those rascally French atheists are safely moored in their stinking pool of a harbour. May they and their ships rot there! But there they are safe, and with at least twenty of our merchantmen.”

“Forty-five, Sir Octavius; forty-five I counted myself, sir.”

“Well, sir, and suppose you did; d—n it, sir, do you call this subordination, contradicting the commander-in-chief? Well, sir, say there

were thirty, yet we have done our duty. So, sir, these twenty or thirty—I suppose that the master has put down the lesser and the more probable number in the log—I repeat, sir, these twenty merchant-ships will, just now, be a great loss to the country. Yet we have, I say, done our duty.”

“No doubt on’t, Sir Octavius.”

“Yet his Majesty, God bless him! and the Admiralty, may they be d——d! and the country—the tag-rag, foh!—no, none of them dare say I have not done my duty.”

“Undoubtable, Sir Octavius.”

“Is it so, Mr. Alsop? And mark you me, I’ll still do it, sir. I will flog this young gentleman.”

“Sir-r-r,” said the astounded first-lieutenant, falling back two paces.

“You hear it, sir; I will flog him. Let the boatswain, and the quarter-master, and the seizings be in the fore-cabin directly. Is not that order plain?”

“ Sir Octavius, if I might most humbly, and most deferentially, and most circumambiently,” —the poor shocked first lieutenant wished for eloquence, and so he chose the longest word of which he knew not the meaning—“ most circumambiently mention, that shots have been fired in anger—several broadsides of shot, Sir Octavius; life has been taken, and blood spilled; in fact, Sir Octavius, we have been in action; and ever since I have been in his Majesty’s navy, which, man and boy, has been about—let me see—”

“ Silence, sir !”

“ I was only going to observe, Sir Octavius, that, after a shot fired in anger, punishment—”

“ Obey !” roared out the Commodore, dashing his iron-loaded arm violently on the table. Mr. Alsop made a hasty retreat, and, when fairly outside the door of the after-cabin, swore an oath so terrible, in which the word tyrant bore a prominent part, that the chaplain said it made *his* very hair stand on end. It must,

therefore, have been a very bad one indeed.

That there is a savage delight, a diabolical pleasure, in giving way to the wild career of anger, those of the irascible temperament too well know; it is like the triumph of riding a wild horse through a wilder storm; a feeling of the enjoyment of a terrible power—a feeling, guilty, despicable, but still, to the tyrannical, a sensation of intense delight; followed, it is true, except in the very maniac, by repentance always—often by the bitterest remorse and agony. To this hideous excitement the old Commodore had now given unbounded sway; yes, wrath may be truly said to be the hunger, the famine of the wicked soul—it will have its prey.

“Mr. Astell, are you prepared to undergo the punishment that your mutinous conduct has brought upon you?”

“Any punishment, sir, even unto death, that inflicts no dishonour.”

“ ’Psha, younker ! Ten dozen would not hurt you.”

“ A single lash would destroy my living soul.”

“ We shall see, we shall see.”

“ You will never see it.”

“ Come, sir, no bravado. The hour is almost up ; my oath is unaccomplished. You called me here to make one request in private ; speak.”

What was said by the nephew to the uncle no one knew ; for the conversation, that had been hitherto carried forward in a loud tone of voice, distinctly audible through the thin bulk-head, seemed suddenly to have ceased.

In the meantime, the first-lieutenant, the boatswain with his cat, and the quarter-masters with their seizings, with three or four of the officers, were assembled in the fore-cabin, to await the issue of the quarrel between the relatives.

“ Brimstone and blue blazes !” said Mr. Alsop,

the first luff, to the chaplain. "Parson, why do you suffer this? You can lay your blubber lips close enough to old Backysquirt's ear when you've got a nasty story to tell him; but now you havn't a word to say to prevent old Iron-fist from flogging his own flesh and blood."

"Hum! ah! I must not interfere. The Baronet loveth the youth, therefore he chasteneth him."

"Liquid lava upon such love! You a man of peace, and be d——d to you. Fie upon you, fie upon you, parson!"

This conversation was held apart, among the officers only.

"I'm calculating as how," said the boatswain, twisting his side-lock respectfully to the first-lieutenant, "that if so be as the lash once touches—O Lord! sir! it will break his heart; he won't live an hour after it."

"Why, sir, there's his hammock-man, as has gotten him into this shindy, roaring like a bull on the main-deck, wanting the skipper to flog

him; he'll jump overboard, if so much as a hand is laid upon Mr. Astell." This information was the offering of one of the quarter-masters.

At this, forward stepped an "ancient mariner," the senior quarter-master of the ship, with his right hand full of the spun yarn for the seizings. "Mr. Alsop," said he, in the most respectful manner, "I am sixty years old and odd, and the back of an old man, whose face has so often braved the enemy, ought not to be bared to the cat; yet, if it could be done, sir, I wish you'd let Sir Hock-ive-us know, for every lash he means to give his nevy I'll take a round dozen, and thank ye; I will, by Josh!" and, in the energy of his action, he flung the seizings out of the port.

"There they go," said the boatswain. I wonder whether they'll fetch the harbour, with this leading wind and the flood tide: a pity they shouldn't have a consort. Well, there goes the michimite's cat—red baize, fringe, and all—to keep company." And he jerked the cat-o'-nine-tails out after the seizings.

“What are you about, Mr. Sorsbey?” said the first-lieutenant. “I can’t suffer this.”

“Well, they may break me for it if they like.”

What more he would have said must remain for ever unknown; for, at this moment, a scuffling was heard in the after-cabin, then a crash of the breaking of glass, and a loud cry for “Help!” from the Commodore.

“The youngster is rubbing out the number of his mess,” said the boatswain.

“Sarve him right,” muttered more than one of the seamen.

The officers, however, immediately rushed into the after-cabin, and found the table overturned, the cabin-windows broken, but the cabin vacant. They heard, however, a violent spluttering and splashing about the rudder-cloth. On looking over the ship’s stern, there was the old Commodore, with his iron hook entangled with the rudder chain, his head nearly on a level with the water, which every moment

splashed over it, taking away his breath at intervals; but, when he could speak, he called out as loudly as his spitting out of the salt water would permit him, "Heave to—lower the boats—unhook me from this cursed chain: I can save him yet. Poor Gus! Dear Gus! Strike out, for your mother's—for your wretched old uncle's sake."

Mr. Alsop comprehended the transaction in a moment; he flew on deck, hove the ship to, and lowered down both quarter-boats. One of these immediately took the Commodore up, and they both went in a vain search after the Earl of Osmondale. Night had now closed in: the *Terrific* was on the lee-shore of an enemy, and the flood-tide had now set in strong towards it. It was, therefore, like dallying within the jaws of death to remain hove-to in the present position. Little time, therefore, could be afforded to search for the unhappy youth, and that time was almost a treason to the safety of the ship and all hands on board. What seemed to con-

firm the opinion that he had sunk was, that the two boats found themselves amongst a fleet of French fishing-smacks, which were never molested by the British cruisers; and, though many of them were hailed, the answer was uniform, that they had seen nothing like a human body, dead or alive, floating about.

Even the distracted old uncle began to perceive that it was time to return, the more especially as lights were observed to begin to drop down into the batteries; so, with a deep sigh from every man, and a heart-broken groan from the old Commodore, the boats turned their heads towards the ship, and left, if not already drowned, the young Earl of Osmondale to perish.

Drenched to the skin with sea-water, exanimate, collapsed, the Commodore, when the boat came alongside, was forced to be lifted on board. He was a hideous spectacle. His countenance pallid, his limbs trembling, the black patch washed away from his eyeless socket, he tottered the most humbled, the most abject wretch across

that quarter-deck from whence he used to command with power greater than that of an Eastern despot. Attended by the chaplain and the surgeon, he entered immediately into his cabin, and flung himself down on the sofa. Prostrated as he was, both in mind and body, the spirit of the sailor was still strong enough upon him to cause him to send for his first lieutenant. In a mild voice, and with accents almost broken, he said to him, "Be so kind, Mr. Alsop, as do all that is necessary to make a good offing. At daylight to-morrow make the signal to shape a course for Spithead, each ship to make the best way she can. If, by to-morrow, I should be dead or raving mad, Mr. Alsop, you had better give yourself an acting order, as captain. As the squadron will be dispersed you will have then no superior officer over you; the short promotion may be of service too with the Admiralty. Good night! Remember, gentlemen," looking at the surgeon and chaplain, "if these should be my last words,

I assert that Mr Alsop is a gallant officer, a gentleman, and a good and a humane man. I would write it, sir, but I cannot hold a pen. Again, good night !”

Mr. Alsop left the cabin to superintend the necessary duty, thunderstruck with the miracle of mildness that he had just witnessed. “ Too good to last long,” he muttered. “ Wish he had clapped his fist to the certificate, however. Acting captain of the Terrific. Good.” And then with increased spirits, he began to execute the orders he had received.

In the cabin, nothing could persuade the Commodore to take any precautions as to his health. When the surgeon remonstrated with him as to the consequences of remaining in his wet clothes, he only shuddered, and sternly said, “ Do you think, sir, that my nephew is dry ?—Poor Augustus !”

At length, he desired to be left alone ; and, as he refused all assistance, either to his body or his mind, the curators of both left him to

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the solitude of the bitterest remorse that could harrow up the heart of a human being. Perhaps it was the best thing, after all, that the old gentleman could have done, the passing of the night in his wet clothes, for the next morning it brought on an aggravated fit of the gout, accompanied by a violent access of lumbago, and an intensely acute attack of rheumatism in all his limbs, excepting the right foot and his iron hand, the former being occupied by the gout, and the latter being no further injured than by being a little rusted. Being now one mass of physical pain, he had less time to attend to the tortures of the mind. The next morning he was, as he deserved to be, a pitiable object; but as he was neither quite dead, nor quite mad, the amiable first lieutenant was forced to wait a little longer for his self-given acting order.

Among the whole ship's company there was, the next morning, a universal feeling of indignation. The most injurious reports became

current against the Commodore. It was more than rumoured that he had stunned or stabbed his nephew with his iron spike, and flung him overboard afterward. Augustus' hammock-man no longer held up his head, but took to his own hammock. But all this fermentation among the crew was nothing to the ebullition that was going on, without ceasing, in the midshipmen's berth. This sorrowful occasion added more tropes and varieties of figures of speech to the eloquence of vituperation than ever Demosthenes or Cicero invented when they poured forth their indignation against tyrants and public peculators. They damned the old Commodore most potently, and with all the unction of a polemical doctor of divinity, they cursed him perpendicularly, from the crown of his bald head to the tip of his gout-tortured toe, and then transversely from the end middle-finger of the right-hand, right through his breast, including heart, lungs, and liver, unto the extreme point of his iron fin at the termination of his left arm. He was thoroughly cursed.

The two midshipmen who had been flogged said glorious, very glorious things upon suicide, and, as they rubbed the afflicted parts, declared that no gentleman ought to be publicly whipped and live ; and then they both vehemently declared that they would follow young Astell's splendid example, and jump overboard, and afterwards sat as still and as quiet as the painful nature of the recent operation they had undergone would permit.

We must now return to the Commodore, who, the following morning, as eagerly solicited as the night before he had sternly repelled all medical assistance. We will not say much of the night of agony that he had passed. It was as if his soul had been tossed to and fro in a boisterous sea of fire. His body now was quivering with pain through every fibre. He was no longer the mild Commodore. Wrapped up in flannels, and with a red woollen night-cap on his head, and heaving upon his sofa, a little after noon he sent for his principal officers.

He received them with a fierce and furious expression of countenance, strangely and often ludicrously diversified by the distortions caused by sudden spasms of pain, and at intervals by the downcast look of shame that a proud man must wear when he is concocting a lie. His speech ran on, somewhat thus:

“Gentlemen,—O this infernal gout!—gentlemen indeed! not one of you had kindness enough, or sense enough, or spirit enough, to beg the boy off; not that I was going to flog him—fire and fury!—parson, do you think I’m like yourself, a mass of blubber with no nerves in me?—boom off your bloated carcass; not a word had you yesterday to say for Gus, and be d—d to you—all alike. I am a wretched old man, but that’s neither here nor there—so mark ye me, gentlemen, an accident has happened to Gus,—poor, noble Augustus!—the strangest, most fatal accident in the world. Gentlemen, I was angry with him,—how justly angry, all know; you heard him dare me to

flog him. Yes, poor boy ! he knew he was safe,—as if I were going to flog my own flesh and blood, my son, gentlemen,—you know he was to have married Becky, Miss Bacuissart I mean. Oh—h—h !—this intolerable lumbago, will nobody knock me on the head at once ?—Poor Becky, poor Becky !—oh,—oh ! you don't know, gentlemen, what I suffer. Now, Augustus has a mother living, you all know, Lady Astell ; we must not be brutes, gentlemen, and break her heart at once. If any scoundrel were to go and bear to her the lie that her dear, her noble, her only son jumped overboard—doctor, doctor, I'm suffocating ! D—n you, sir, is this a position to place a patient like me in ?—lift me up—stand aside, gentlemen,—give me air, give me air. It won't do—brandy ! a glass of brandy !”

“ With all submission, Sir Octavius, I supplicate, as regards this brandy—”

“ My dear doctor, but this one glass, and then I will obey you like a spaniel.”

The brandy was drunk, and the Commodore

continued. "This is a melancholy business, gentlemen, and Lady Astell is a fearful woman. God help us all! Now mark you me, this is just the way that this dreadful accident happened. In our private interview in the cabin, I admonished my nephew, and I think I brought him to a sense of his disrespectful conduct; we got, at length, into a very friendly discourse. Oh! these spasms, these spasms! What do you mean, Mr. Bronston, by those mutinous looks?—do you think I lie, sir?—Well, in the midst of this, those infernal king-killing, God-hating French began popping at us; it made me a little angry, I must confess, and something Gus said provoked me again. When it was all over, I was a little angry, and talked again about flogging, half joke, and half earnest, when you made your report to me, did I not, Mr. Astell?"

"As you please, Sir Octavius," said the conscientious first lieutenant.

"'Tis not as I please, sir,—'tis the fact. Well,

Augustus and I were again left alone, and after a little more lecturing on my part, we made all right. I believe we shook hands—I am not quite certain, but I may say so;”—and now the old man began to tremble exceedingly, and to speak so rapidly, as hardly to be intelligible. “Now Augustus, said I, as I was walking the stern-walk, looking at the miserable ball-practice of those beggarly French, I think, Gus, they have put a shot in under the lee-counter; if they have, we must plug the shot-hole directly. Jump, Augustus, into the quarter-gallery, and see if I’m right; but don’t overreach yourself; but he did,—he did—he did,—and I am a miserable man—I caught a glance of his beautiful hair one moment in the wake of the ship,—the Lord have mercy on his soul, and on mine!”

The wretched uncle paused, and there was a dead silence. No one believed him, and he saw it. At that moment Augustus Astell was fully avenged. After a struggle the Commodore proceeded.

“Out of respect for the memory of the departed, you will let all this, gentlemen, be made known; and,” turning to the master, whom, with the other officers ordered to their cabins, he has released the night before, “you will insert in the log, that, during the action with the French squadron, Mr. Astell accidentally fell overboard whilst in the execution of a perilous duty, and was unfortunately drowned. Gentlemen, I have done.”

Having finished speaking, the Commodore sank back exhausted upon the sofa, and turned his face away, hiding it partly in the pillow; but his awe-struck audience did not disperse,—there was a whispering among them, and, at length, Mr. Alsop said, “Sir Octavius, it is not our part to doubt one word of all you have been so good as to tell us concerning this unfortunate affair; but we shall have some trouble to make the account generally believed—inasmuch—inasmuch——”

The Commodore, without lifting up his head, waved his hand impatiently towards the door.

“Inasmuch—that is to say, or I should say, on account of—because—just before Mr. Astell jumped,—fell overboard, I mean,—he wrote a short letter to his mother, which he swore his messmate, Mr. Danvers, to deliver with his own hand.”

“And he’ll keep his oath,” grunted out the old quarter-master.

As if a Promethean flash of tenfold life had passed through the frame of the Commodore, he started on his legs, and, despite his gout, lumbago, and his rheumatism, never stood more firmly upright in his life.

“The letter,—the letter!” he roared out in a voice of thunder.

“Mr. Danvers has it.”

“Send for him immediately—fly! why is he not here?”

Mr. Danvers walked into the cabin as stealthily and as suspiciously as the fox might have been supposed to do had he been compelled to walk into the den of the lion that simulated sickness.

“ The letter, the letter ! and if you have broken the seal—” bellowed out, with extended hand, the Commodore.

“ What letter, Sir Octavius ?” said Mr. Innocence, looking down modestly, and folding his hands demurely before him.

“ The letter Mr. Astell wrote yesterday, sirrah !”

“ O, Sir Octavius, he never wrote any letter to me ; we were always close enough together for conversation.”

“ Dare you trifle with me ?—Mr. Sorsbey, the cat.—I mean, sir, the letter that Mr. Astell wrote to his mother.”

“ I don’t know what letter you allude to, Sir Octavius.”

“ How dare you to lie, sir, on an occasion so solemn as is this ?—to lie almost over the dead body of your messmate ;—the letter, sir, immediately.”

“ O, sir, the occasion, as you say, sir, is too awful for *guilty* lying ; I now do remember

something about a note—Is that the letter that you mean, sir?”

“ You begin to remember, do you? — I mean the letter, sir, that Mr. Astell gave you for his mother, just before he accidentally fell overboard.”

“ That letter,—O, *that* letter, Sir Octavius. I hope, sir, with all submission, that you do not think that I would tell a lie on this solemn occasion any more than yourself, Sir Octavius. That letter *accidentally fell overboard too, sir.*”

“ Destruction ! does a boy like this dare to mock me ? Where is the boatswain ? Mr. Sorsbey, bring the cat directly.”

“ You may flog me, Sir Octavius, if you like ; but depend upon it *I* will not jump overboard,” said the little mutincer, quite composedly.

“ If you please, Sir Hoctivehus,” said the boatswain, with a scrape of the foot, and a bow of the head ; “ if you please, sir, yesterday—in

the shindy and confuscation yesterday,—the michimite's cat fell overboard by accident."

"Get the thief's cat!—no—gentlemen, leave me, all but Mr. Alsop and Mr. Danvers."

The Commodore again sank almost lifelessly upon his sofa. Well did he divine of what fatal importance that letter would become to him. Suffering as he did, he made every effort to recover it. He first sent for the master-at-arms and the most intelligent of the ship's corporals to search the boxes and the desks of Mr. Danvers, and then every chink and orifice in the midshipman's berth, not permitting the youngster to leave his sight during the process. When this proved fruitless, he had his person thoroughly overhauled, and with no better success. Both the Commodore and the first lieutenant then did all they could by cajolery to get it from him, but he pertinaciously maintained that he had it not; and the only confession that they could extort from him was, that, suspecting for what he had been sent for into his cabin, he

had, as he came up, thrown it out of one of the lower-deck ports. With this the wretched baronet was forced to appear satisfied.

The next day he anchored with his weather-worn squadron at Spithead, the most miserable man upon the face of the earth—though he was afloat, we will not correct the expression, for, at Spithead, at least, there is earth under the waters, whatever waters there may be elsewhere under the earth.

Is not the whole of this chapter one *great moral lesson* to all who are put in authority?

CHAPTER VI.

“ You have not apparell’d your fury well,
It goes too grand and seems an acted pageant.”

Lady. “ It is an ornament
Makes it more terrible, and you shall find it
A weighty injury, and attended on
By fitting vengeance.”

DEVIL’S LAWCASE, BY WEBSTER.

WHILST the Commodore, a prey to every bitter feeling, and perfectly afraid to show his face before any of his own family, was endeavouring to dispel all reflection by the energy with which he was refitting his squadron, we must now repair with our friend, the reader—for, by this time, we know that we have made him our fast and good friend—with him then we must repair to Trestletree Hall.

April had just commenced with its alternate smiles and tears, and the long twilight was shedding a mist, balmy with the blossoms of the fruit-trees, around the old and large mansion. Though not cold enough to require it, a clear fire enlivened the drawing-room, and, as no one seemed to think it necessary, candles had not yet been ordered. This large room is occupied, in the first place, by the stately and still very beautiful Lady Astell, and Miss Matilda Bacuissart, looking very lady-like, very pretty, and extremely delicate. The other female was Miss Rebecca, our sad old Commodore's daughter, behaving with a great deal of propriety, as this was the period in which she benefited much by the control and the example of her aunt Astell. The fourth person was a gentleman, our quiet and intelligent friend, Mr. Underdown, whom we left in ill health at Rio Janeiro, but who, not having had to chase a flying squadron, had arrived in England perfectly recovered, about a fortnight before.

Lady Astell had only arrived to dinner, full of the intelligence of the anchoring at Spithead of the Commodore's flying squadron, and in a violent trepidation between joy and fear, expecting every moment to hear the clattering of horses' hoofs, and the riot of chariot-wheels, bearing her brother and her only son to her arms. She had travelled post with Mr. Underdown to Trestletree Hall to meet them.

Five months had now elapsed since the titles and estates of her husband's family had devolved upon her son Augustus. She fondly hoped to be the first person to communicate to him this news, the first to hail him as the Earl of Osmondale, which natural wish the wilful Miss Rebecca had most wickedly resolved to defeat, even if by so doing she were trampled under the horses' feet.

Altogether, it was an hour of great excitement. Every one was restless, and hardly reasonable, if we except Mr. Underdown, who, every now and then, they all thought ill-naturedly, and for him most ill-naturedly,

threw in very unpalatable doubts as to the arrival of the expected uncle and his nephew that evening. He did not much regard Miss Matilda when she said that he was unreasonable, and only laughed when Rebecca called him cross, and threatened to purloin his book ; but, upon his saying with a studious carelessness, that they had better give up all hopes of the truants that night, Lady Astell threw upon him a look so reproachful, that he felt it to the heart, and immediately commenced talking of the fête that had been long in preparation, to welcome the young lord to his tenantry and the family estates.

They were soon again on the long-disputed point as to whether Augustus should be drawn in a triumphal car through his park by twenty young farmers, who had requested to be allowed thus to show their respect, but upon the propriety of which exhibition his mother had some doubts, as savouring too much of vain pageantry on the one hand, and debasement on the other. Miss Rebecca was strongly for the car and the

young peasants, as she secretly promised herself a place beside him. Matilda was also of her opinion, whilst Mr. Underdown allowed the car, but disallowed the men harnessed to it;—he recommended four white ponies, and as many young men as chose to walk beside them, whilst his mother really cared little about how he entered his future home, provided only that he came.

“ I’m sure it can’t be any debasement to the men,” said Rebecca, tossing back her clustering ringlets with the prettiest little disdain imaginable ; “ for Gusty—I should say the Earl of Osmondale—has very often drawn me about in the garden-chair, and I have seen the Earl himself make a back for half an hour together, for the village lads at fly-foot, and get his dear back well thumped too with their huge brown fists, as they went striddle-straddle over him.”

“ Striddle-straddle ! my dear Becky,” said the gentle Matilda ; “ I think the word is astride, and even that word is not very pretty on the lips of a lady.”

“ Fiddle-de-dee, aunty ! what am I to say when I see a parcel of young men open —— ”

“ Turn your head on one side and say nothing at all—both leap-frog and fly-foot are very vulgar games—I wonder that the young scions of the aristocracy condescend to demean themselves by playing at it. Don’t you think, dear Mr. Underdown, that such games are excessively vulgar ? ”

“ Almost as vulgar as eating and drinking,” said the gentleman, with a quiet smile.

“ There, I told you so,” said Miss Matilda ;
“ your own favourite is against you.”

“ Never, never ! ” said Rebecca, jumping up, and giving him a smacking kiss, that might have been heard at the lodge.

“ I am excessively shocked ! O fie ! Miss Rebecca Bacuissart, you never saw me jump up and kiss Mr. Underdown in that outrageous manner.”

“ In what manner then would *you* do it ? ”

“ In no manner at all, miss. And besides,

you must permit me to tell you that, when young ladies, who think that they have completed their education, have occasion to speak of that part of the person of young noblemen, which is covered by a portion of the coat that does not button up, it is by no means consonant with the best notions of propriety to call it "his dear back."

"Hoity toity ! here's a sermon from aunt Mat."

"Aunt Mat indeed ! Agnes," turning to Lady Astell, "reprove your too forward niece, if you please."

"We will, my gentle sister, that there be neither reprovings nor reproaches this blessed evening. I almost love her for the wildness of her spirits. O Matilda ! is not Augustus coming home ?"

"Augustus is coming home !"

The words were repeated by all present. They were a talisman for the purest happiness.

"Now, my dear Rebecca," said Mr. Under-

down, almost getting the beautiful romp on his knees, "let us hear the end of your argument in favour of turning the village lads into horses. From so *methodical* and *systematical* a young lady, the reasons must be very forcible."

"Ah! you're laughing at me, dear, naughty Underdown; but I don't care. I have got very good reasons: in the first place, neither Augustus nor myself are very heavy."

"Oh, ho, ho! the secret's out at last!" and all present joined heartily in the good man's laugh. "No other reason is requisite; so you ride with the Earl."

In the midst of the hilarity in which the beautiful, and now much improved hoyden joined, the gates of the lodge were heard to slam to, and a single horseman dashed up at speed to the door. The laugh was suspended—did I say, only the laugh?—every faculty of the whole party seemed wound up in one intense feeling of anxiety. No one spoke or moved, until the same horseman was heard to retreat.

As the noise of the clatter of his steed died away along the gravelled avenue, a slight yet very perceptible shudder passed over the frame of Lady Astell—the first dread presentiment of evil.

This silence was at length broken by three slow and, just now, ominous taps at the door; and no other person had sufficient fortitude to utter the simple words, “Come in!” but the youngest of the party. The old and white-haired butler entered, with a large letter upon a salver, but the seal was designedly placed underneath. He advanced with a grave and slow step to Lady Astell; she extended her hand towards it tremblingly, and no sooner had Jacob seen it in her possession than he hurried from the drawing-room with all the agility of a young man.

No sooner had Lady Astell’s eye caught the large black seal, than she shook the letter from her, as if, incautiously, she had taken up some noxious reptile.

“I cannot, I dare not read it; Mr. Under-

down—dare you ?” Having said this, she could scarcely prevent herself from fainting. Miss Matilda had already taken an attitude.

Mr. Underdown picked up the fatal letter ; but, before he broke the seal, he rang for the servant.

“ Where is the messenger who brought this ? ”

“ Gone, sir ; he would not even alight : said, sir, he had orders to return immediately.”

“ Did he not say who sent this ? ”

“ He did not, sir ; he said nothing else.”

“ You may go.” When the servant had retired, Mr. Underdown said, in the most soothing of all human tones, “ My dear, dear Lady Astell, we must prepare ourselves for some affliction. Let us each pray inwardly, for a space, for fortitude, before we break this dismal seal. I am grieved, much grieved, to say, that the superscription is in the handwriting of the Commodore ; ” and then, his voice faltering so as to be almost inaudible, he continued, “ We must prepare ourselves for the worst.”

“Yes,” said the little dutiful daughter, sobbing aloud: “the direction is in father’s nasty pothooks and hangers. What can have happened to dear Augustus?”

“Let us kneel and pray.”

* * * * *

“Now am I prepared. My dear, my noble friend, read the letter, but silently; and then tell me, in one single word, my fate,” said the mother, with the dreadful calmness of a settled despair.

Mr. Underdown turned his face away, and, whilst the tears streamed down his thin and pale cheeks, he slowly read the woe-fraught document from beginning to end. Having done this, he folded it up, and put it, with a sorrowful deliberation, in his waistcoat-pocket. He advanced towards Lady Astell: she stood up with a smile—a *smile!*—oh! that sickly, ghastly, heart-rending smile—to receive him. “Speak: oh! my friend! fear me not; I am nerved to hear the worst. I am strong: speak.”

“Augustus is in heaven.”

Lady Astell fell into the arms that her former lover had, with a fearful presentiment, held out to receive her. She had happily fainted.

Scenes like these are best hurried over. Let my gentle readers of the tender sex imagine, if they will, the agonizing recoveries to recollection, and the fearful relapses of the bereaved mother—the more violent, yet infinitely less painful, hysterics of Miss Matilda—and the wild, and almost savage grief of Rebecca, who, as yet, had never fainted. Let us now suppose that it is nearly midnight; and that the afflicted party, each fearful of the effect of solitude upon the other, dread to separate.

At length, the bereaved mother lifted up her voice, and spoke:

“The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!”

“Amen!” responded Mr. Underdown, solemnly.

“But it is thou, oh, my brother! who hast

done this—this over-cruel thing. Who now shall fill up the void in the chivalry of the country? The noble of the land may now call in vain for the representative of the noblest of the races among them. He is dead! My Augustus! my son! my brave and my gentle one! Brother, thy face I never can again look upon; we must be strangers to each other. Your heart was stone when you plucked my solace, my support, my glory from me. You cannot give me my son again. I forgive you—I hope I do forgive you, but let me never see you more.”

“Agnes! Lady Astell!” said the agitated Underdown, “this is unchristian!”

“It ain’t,” roared out the spoiled child; “it ain’t, sir. Let father show his face, if he dares—let him, I say. O Augustus! my friend, my dear gentle friend, my playfellow. I’ll care for nothing now. I’ll learn no more lessons, read no more books; no, I’ll never go to church again—never—Augustus, we shall

never more sit in that pew together. I'll tear my clothes, I'll break all my playthings—I will. I'll do all, all I can to spite and to vex my father ;—yes, I will, I will ;” and she stamped on the floor in wild, and impotent, and most unbecoming passion.

“Go to bed, Miss Bacuissart, directly !” said Mr. Underdown, quite angrily.

“I won't. How dare you to tell me to go to bed in my own house ? I don't love you any longer, nor I won't let you love me. I'll sit up crying all night. Go to bed, indeed ! Aunt Agnes won't tell me to go to bed. Dear, good aunt Agnes, if you say to me, go, I will go ;” and she came and kneeled at her feet, and buried her tear-scorched and inflamed countenance in her lap. “You will not scold me ; no, you loved me for poor Gusty's sake.”

“Loved you—oh, yes ! now and for ever, my dear, dear child !”

“I will go to bed, aunt, if you wish it.”

“No, dear ; you had a noble space in the

heart of my son; you shall share in our grief. Now, Mr. Underdown, I know that my task in this world is done; I must prepare myself to die. A few more scenes like this would kill me. To-morrow I will depart for my own desolate home, and make myself ready to render up my soul to its Creator. I cannot stay longer in the house of this murder—this cruel brother: here the air seems to suffocate me. See everything ready for my departure to-morrow, immediately after breakfast—breakfast!—shall I ever eat again? But, before I seek my solitude, let me know all—the manner of it; I am too much stunned to feel a second blow. My approved, my constant friend, read the letter.”

Without hesitation or remark, Mr. Underdown read as follows:

“ H. M. S. Terrific, Spithead,

April 3, 17—

“ MY DEAR SISTER,

“ I wish that I had Underdown near me.

I'm never lucky when he's not within hail. Couldn't tell you the news by word of mouth. Sha'n't come home till much of the gale has blown itself out. Singular thing this, as I hear that he had come to the title. No luck, as I said, when Underdown is away; pray send him here as soon as may be. This is very bad news, indeed, sister; but we are all God's creatures, and in his hands. I am a good deal broken down myself; refitting the squadron, as you know; but it does not much lessen my grief, and this unfortunate news—but I've forgot that I've not yet told you. It is, perhaps, best that I should make an extract from the ship's log. There can be no lie, there, you know, sister. 'March 31st. 5 P.M. Strong breezes and cloudy. Wind north and by west a quarter west. Cape La Hogue west, a quarter south, fifteen miles. Saw the French squadron, six sail of the line and two frigates, with twenty prizes, close in-shore on the larboard-tack, going free. At 6° 30', French squadron, round-

ing into Cherbourg, opened fire upon the *Terrific*; returned ditto with repeated broadsides. At 7° 40' ceased firing on both sides. During the action, the Honourable Mr. Augustus Astell, midshipman, fell overboard, whilst in the execution of a perilous duty, and was unfortunately drowned. At 8 P.M. filled and made sail.'

“So you see, sister, we must bear up as well as we can. Tell Matilda not to take on; and my love to Becky, and I shall keep a taut hand on her when I come home. Upon second thoughts, let Underdown stay with you for a time: he is a good hand at swabbing up a grief. No more, at present, from your loving brother, ”

“OCTAVIUS BACUISSARI.”

When the reading of this letter had finished, Mr. Underdown said, “My dear Lady Astell, though our beloved Augustus has perished obscurely, he perished as gloriously as any hero who ever sacrificed himself for the good of his

country. I will not, just now, urge upon you the usual topics of consolation. The blow is a dreadful one, and your grief must be poignant. I would have it so. But I need not tell you, that there is, above us, a fountain of mercy that is inexhaustible. Apply there, my dear lady."

But her mind was wandering over the turbulent waves, among which she fancied that she saw the corpse of her beloved son, tossing to and fro.

"No funeral rites," she exclaimed; "no decent service of the dead! On shore, even a favourite dog finds a burial-place. My son, my son!"

"What, O my friend! are forms and ceremonies, compared to the incense of the heart? The soul will, in its purity, as easily arise from the depths of the seas as from the sculptured monumental marble; but, if it would soothe you, let us now, even before we separate for the night, read the service for the dead."

“It would soothe me greatly. Let all the household be assembled.”

The scene that followed was a painful and much exciting one ; yet, upon the conclusion, it had a tranquillising effect. The tears of all still flowed ; but they were, with but two exceptions, tears of pious resignation as well as of grief.

As Lady Astell departed to her chamber, Mr. Underdown said to her, “Lady Astell, by the chaste love that I once bore you, and by the holy friendship that will bind our hearts for ever, I conjure you in your private devotions ere you sleep—”

—“Sleep !”

“God will, in his goodness, send sleep to you. I conjure you, ere you sleep, to remember in your prayers your unfortunate brother ; ask a blessing upon his head.”

“I will—if I can.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ This is the vengeance of a soul drown'd deep
In th' unfathomed seas of matchless horror.”

WE must now proceed to relate the events of the following morning. Mr. Underdown was always an early riser ; but he seldom, excepting in the middle of summer, left his room before breakfast, employing his time either in study, or in checking the accounts of Sir Octavius' very large estate. Miss Matilda Bacuissart hardly, on any occasion, could be induced to make her appearance before noon ; whilst Rebecca, as the whim of the moment controlled her, was up before the carol of the earliest lark, or in bed when the sun had commenced throwing shadows eastward.

Now, on this memorable fourth of May, exactly at nine o'clock, there sat in the breakfast-room at Trestletree Hall, in their own estimation, two very important personages. The one was Becky Backy, for no better title did she deserve, if you regarded her appearance. She had been scarcely sleeping all night for crying, and, as the first glimmer of day broke through the window-curtains, the heiress of Trestletree Hall arose, and, unwashed and unkempt, she came down stairs, unlocked, unbarred, and unbolted the hall-door, and straightway went to visit Augustus Astell's white pony. The morning was raw and misty, and the paddock she had to cross over, and the dirty stable-yard she had to wade through, bedabbled and bemired her clothes up to the waist. It was of little consequence to her, for she had now determined to do everything that she ought not to do; and, as she was quite proof against taking cold, she had neither care for appearances nor alarm for consequences.

As all the stables, which were at some distance from the house, were walled in, the door of the stable that contained the pony had not been locked, so the young lady was soon within it, with her two white and symmetrical arms round the neck of the gentle and yet spirited steed. She caressed and wept over it more fondly than she would have done to its master, and, as she thought herself unwatched and unheard, she gave vent to the most endearing expressions to the memory of Augustus.

“ I’ve a great mind to starve myself; but it is dreadful to be hungry. I won’t live; I’ll kill myself. I’ll wait till father ^{*}comes home, and then set fire to the house. I will, dear, dear, dear Augustus, for your sake. We’ll all die together; and then there’ll be an end of the family, and of their foolish pride, and lectures on proprieties, and lessons, and all. I’ll burn the house down, and all in it. But poor, good Mr. Underdown—what has he done that I should burn him? No; I must wait till he is away.

And aunt Matty, good, silly aunt Matty ; I'd burn my whole body sooner than scald her little finger. And father—rough, old father—after fighting so long and so hard—shocking to burn him ; and so kind to me, too : no—he mustn't be burned. Oh dear ! there's nobody to burn but myself. What shall I do—what shall I do ? Do they call this a bed for Rover ?”

So, having her attention directed to something else, she was a little less inconsolable, and commenced making up the litter with a large pitchfork, an occupation that was, alas ! not too unusual with her. She had not, however, poked and tossed about long, before some one under the straw laid hold of the prong of the fork, and a broad, very boyish, and merry-looking visage hove above the litter, whilst the rest of the body was still concealed beneath.

“ ’Vast heaving !” cried the funny face. “ You have nearly poked out my starboard skylight.”

Nothing daunted at this singular apparition,

Rebecca withdrew one pace, and then, poising the weapon in her right hand in the act to strike, she stood no bad representation of a young Venus of the Amazons.

“And who are you, that I find concealed like a robber, on *my* premises? Stand up and speak!” was the bold challenge of the fearless hoyden.

“And so I will. I am sure, if you are but half so kind as you are pretty, you will do me no injury. I am sure that I am speaking to the daughter of the fighting old Commodore, d—n him!”

“How dare you, miserable vagrant that you are, speak thus of my father with disrespect?”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Rebecca, but I thought that I just now heard you talking yourself of making a grill of the old boy.”

“No more of this nonsense, or I will rouse the establishment. Again I say, who are you, that I may know how to act by you?”

“Now don’t be frightened, Miss Rebecca.”

“What, frightened at such a little thing as you are?—are you a beggar, or a tramp, or what?”

“Alas! young lady, something not much better—I am a deserter.”

“Speak—quick—from what ship?”

“The Terrific.”

“What, what of my uncle?—and, O what of my dear Augustus?”

“I was his friend—his dearest bosom friend.”

“What, of Augustus Astell?”

“Of him—of no one else—I have deserted on his account.”

“Deserted for him, for my own Augustus? You dear little fellow, how I love you!”

“Yes, miss, I have suffered much for him; your respected father has flogged me twice on his account.”

“Poor little fellow!—come up to the house, and tell me all about it.”

But little Danvers did not like the risk; so he and miss walked about in the shrubberies

till nine o'clock, during which time the ragged little midshipman had done his utmost to make the daughter believe that her father was one of the most execrable tyrants that ever stepped upon that former arena of tyranny, the quarter-deck of a man-of-war.

Now let us view these two sudden friends walking hand in hand up to the door, smiles struggling with tears in the countenance of the young lady, impudence with alarm on that of the run-away reefer.

"May I believe it?" said the impassioned hoyden.

"Not exactly believe it, Miss Becky, but the chances are great in his favour: the evening was dark, and though the weather was cold, the salt-water is always warmer than the air, and the offing was covered with small craft. Augustus swam like a duck—I never can think that he was drowned, he's such a fine fellow."

"I will think him alive still; I could hug you for the very thought. Shall we tell ~~this~~ dear mother what we believe?"

“ I don’t know—I think ~~not~~, it would worry her so much, miss. And if he should be drowned after all !”

“ Never think so—are you sure that he could swim ?”


“ Why, I never saw him ; and I don’t think that he ever told me he could, but he was such a glorious chap, he could do everything.”

“ We’ll ask Mr. Underdown directly.”

“ Mr. Underdown, old Ironfin’s secretary, is he here ?”

“ O yes, he’ll be glad to see you.”

“ No doubt, no doubt ; but, miss, I must up anchor and make a fair start of it. Why, he’d hand me over to the C. P. before a cat could lick her ear, or as we say afloat, in the twinkling of a bed-post.”

“ You say very funny things afloat—but you shall stay here and  say them ashore. Why, do you think I’m going to part with you, my nice little midshipman ?”

“ You’re sure he wont ?”

“Daren’t,—O, you are a dear little fellow!”

So in they walked together into the breakfast-room, and very soon every servant of the house was tumbling over each other to do the thousand-and-one orders of the absolute heiress. The most sumptuous breakfast was ordered—fowls, with mushroom-sauce, were to be immediately prepared, and the best wines got up from the cellars.

Now little Daniel Danvers, or double Dan, as he was usually called among his messmates, though he was treated by Miss Rebecca in a manner so patronising, was full three years older than herself, though hardly so tall. He was broad, and somewhat stunted in his growth, but with one of the most pleasing faces for a chubby one that ever grinned over a flinty biscuit. He was so astonished at all he saw, that had he not been excessively hungry, or we should rather say, completely starved, he would have been motionless with awe. The magnificence of the apartment, far surpassing

anything that he had previously conceived, the plenitude and the refinement of the repast, and the assiduity of the numerous servants to forestal the least wish of a handsome, though dirty, statternly girl, appeared to him like the enchantment of some fairy tale. However, he ate on and said nothing, whilst his benevolent hostess, extremely amazed by an appetite so far beyond what she even conceived possible as belonging to a human being, continued heaping his plate with luxuries.

“ This potted char, you delightful Dan—” The door opened, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Underwood, and in her travelling-dress, the majestic figure of Lady Astell entered the apartment. Daniel’s knife and fork fell from his hands in affright, and he remained staring at the new-comers, as if the last mouthful that he had swallowed had been too large for deglutition.

“ Never mind them, Daniel dear, it’s only

aunt Agnes and Underdown. Don't trouble yourself to rise."

"Who, in the name of all that is improper, have you got here?" said Mr. Underdown, rather sharply.

"O Rebecca! what vagary is this?" said Lady Astell, mournfully.

Now Mr. Danvers had nothing about him to plead for him but his face, which, when prepossessing, they say is a letter of recommendation written by the hand of God himself. As regarded Daniel, the letter itself was indisputable, but the appearance of the body that carried it, and of all accessories belonging to it, gave the lie direct to the assertion of the letter. He had travelled on foot for nearly eighty miles through wet and inclement weather; his clothes were ragged, the little linen that could be discovered about his neck was filthy, and his hands were black with ingrained dirt. Add to all this, the fluttering remnants of his uni-

form bore about them ample specimens of the bed that he had occupied on the previous night, for they were covered with hay and straw, and other kinds of stable dirt. Rebecca, though in sad plight, perhaps never looked more beautiful. The glow of enthusiasm was on her countenance, and her eyes lightened up with the immortal fires of the soul.

“Who is this, Rebecca?” said Mr. Underdown, sternly.

“My guest and my friend,—quite enough, I should think, to satisfy you, sir,” said the fair vixen, firing up. “Father says I’m not to be thwarted, and I won’t.”

“Pray, miss,—and I ask it with much humility, where did you pick up this rather ragged friend of yours?”

“In the stable; he had slept there all night—more shame for us. Our best bed is not good enough for him.”

“Mr. Underdown,” said the intruder, stam-

mering, "I was the friend of Augustus Astell."

"My boy's friend!" shrieked out the mother.
"Speak, speak—"

"I declare, it is Daniel Danvers," said Mr. Underdown, now recognising him for the first time.

"Yes, I am that unfortunate person. I was the messmate, the confidant of Augustus Astell. I am now a deserter from the Terrific—you may give me up if you like; I shall not regret it, since I have kept my oath."

"What oath?—hasten to let me know all. If you are my son's friend I will protect you."

"O aunt! O Mr. Underdown! before another word is spoken to him, could Augustus swim?"

The answer from both was, "Not at all."

All Rebecca's buoyancy of spirits vanished in an instant. She burst forth into an hysterical sobbing, and buried her face in her hands on the breakfast-table.

“What is all this?” said the agitated mother, scarcely able to speak.

“Why, my lady, just before Augustus jumped overboard—”

“What horror is this?—overboard! my son a suicide!” shrieked out the distracted mother, staggering to a chair.

“Rash young man, behold what you have done!” cried Mr. Underdown, seizing Danvers by the collar, and shaking him rudely; “come out of this apartment with me.”

But Lady Astell had not fainted; a new and strange life seemed to have been given to her, and in a hoarse voice she said, “Mr. Underdown, I command you cease. He was my son’s friend—respect him, love him, venerate him,—he is the messenger of truth; the slightest violence, the least harshness, even of a word, towards that youth, and our friendship is severed, and for ever. Come to me, my son’s friend, come to me that I may embrace you. Now, by the mother that must once have loved

you, by everything dear to your young heart, tell me all—all—all ! Mr. Underdown, forbear ; I am not mad—I am not agitated—I am no longer the weak creature that I was yesterday—now tell me all.”

And then the bewildered youth told the fact simply as all supposed that it happened.

As this dreadful narrative proceeded, a singular alteration came over Lady Astell. She seemed to be changing her identity ; the features of the countenance could scarcely be said to be the same—their former expression was gone for ever, and instead thereof, they assumed a rigid and vindictive sternness that belonged more to chiselled marble than to mere muscle, veins, and arteries. The stature appeared to increase, the colour flashed again upon her cheek. Now all saw that she had other purpose than to die. At length, an iron smile wound itself, like some fell snake, about the curve of her upper lip. When the sad story was told, there remained but little of the

christian Agnes Astell—she had become the ancient Medea.

In the course of this narration, the letter from the desperate son to the mother was mentioned, yet she asked not for it. As the boy spoke on, he tendered it; but she then put it back with her hand—strange, that when the awful catastrophe of her own son was detailed, she shed no tears. Yet when young Daniel told of his own persecutions, the flatteries and the floggings that he had suffered to make him deliver up the secreted document, and the perils and the privations that he had undergone in deserting, and in his journey to Trestletree Hall, after having been in vain at Lady Astell's residence, the silent tears stole down her face. When all was finished, she said quietly, "Give me now the letter."

She took and kissed it; but did not then break the seal. Afterwards she turned to Mr. Underdown, and said to him, in a strange, unnatural tone, "You have heard all this. Have you

anything to say in extenuation of this murder by a kinsman? if so, say it now."

"Compose yourself, dear Lady Astell,—your appearance terrifies me."

"Does it?—I never felt in better health in my life—stronger, more resolute, or more able to do any befitting deed. Will you answer my question?"

"Simply, then, this; that there is no evidence to contradict the statement, that Sir Octavius himself made in the cabin to his officers, in his letter to you."

"I am satisfied; I will not ask you if you yourself believe it. Yesterday I knew that I had no longer a son—I learn to-day that I have no longer a brother."

"Let me reason with you."

"No, sir; there is a higher duty imposed upon us. Let us read the mandate of the dead. Listen to the voice of him,—the young, and the beautiful, unnaturally drowned beneath the chilly waves,—let us see what he wills us to

do, and that, so sure as there is a righteous God to punish this murder, that will we surely do. Listen." She then read the letter, which we here repeat.

"MOTHER,

"When you see this, go and demand from your brother your murdered son. I am praying to God to bless you.

"AUGUSTUS ASTELL."

"Augustus, my beloved! you shall be obeyed to the letter. The question shall be thundered in his ears—sleeping and waking he shall hear it; in health and in sickness—yea, it shall echo among the jabbering of the evil spirits that will haunt his bed of death."

"This is too horrible, too unchristian, too unwomanly."

"Say you so? and you all say you loved Augustus. Come, my young and gallant sir," turning to Danvers, "have you parents?"

"I am an orphan."

“ So much the better—I adopt you. You will away with me, the carriage is at the door ; let me leave this accursed roof, but I will return to it again in terror. For the sake of those who remain, I will not lay my curse on the door-posts, but I will shake the dust off my feet on the threshold. Rebecca, honour your father ; some time hence I may learn again to love you. Mr. Underdown, farewell ;—would that I could say, ‘ may we meet hereafter in happier times.’ ” Then, leaning on the shoulder of the youth, she strode proudly through the hall, stepped with him into her carriage, and the horses being urged into a furious gallop, the whole passed away like the disturbed vision of the morning that haunts the sick man.

“ Behold two noble spirits degraded ! ” said the sorrowful Mr. Underdown, as he directed his steps to the library.

Awed and stupified, Rebecca went and flung herself upon her bed, and cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Like a rocky-hearted demon,
He flogged all his seamen,
And their grog he did stop in port and at sea ;
So in scorn they all held him,
And from command they expell’d him,
By an order from the lords of the admiral-tee.”

ON board of His Majesty’s ship the Terrific, refitting with all speed at Spithead, matters did not, as far as concerned the old Commodore, proceed better than at Trestletree Hall. After putting everything in motion to recover the deserted midshipman, Daniel Danvers, the sick and soul-troubled Commodore was ten days afterwards petrified with astonishment, and sorely annoyed, by an order coming down from

the Admiralty for the honourable discharge, with all arrears of pay and prize-money, to be paid, not only of the said deserted Daniel Danvers, midshipman, but also of Thomas Sunninghill, ordinary seaman, and formerly the Earl of Osmondale's hammock-man.

This portended mischief—and the mischief was not slow in arriving. Another two short days, and lo! the Commodore is superseded in his command, without reason assigned, without ceremony, even without official civility. The thing was, to the old gentleman, for some hours, incredible. “Supersede me!” he roared out, foaming with passion, “at this critical time, too. Are the ministry mad? Me!—the fighting old Commodore! Me—O no, they have *not* superseded me. Yet this letter looks damnably like it. Blood and fury! I’ll know the very bottom of this. Man the barge.”

The barge was manned, and there was another mortification awaiting him. The news had spread, and there was a broad, and not-to-

be-understood grin on the countenance of every one of the boat's crew.

“This is too bad,” said Sir Octavius. “There’s the gratitude of the world for you. —Now all these fellows I have diligently flogged into thirteen of the best seamen in the fleet, and mark ye me, the undutiful rascals are quizzing the old Commodore. O my fine fellows, but we will square our yards together when we get on board again. Give way.”

They needed not the order. They never before pulled with a better will. They believed that they were landing him for the last time from the Terrific, and, for once, they were right. And yet, so suitable was Sir Octavius altogether to their rough and generous nature, that when they had got a new commander, there was not a man on board that did not wish for the old Commodore back. But, as they landed him at the Sallyport at Portsmouth, they were indignant at his conduct towards his nephew, for many of the men ac-

tually thought that, in his rage, he had thrust him overboard with his own hand.

At the moment when the Commodore was assisted on shore, for he was still very ill, the coxswain, with a grin upon his countenance, took off his hat, and "supposed that they need not wait for his honour."

For this ungracious hint, the Commodore knocked him with his iron hook fairly off the step into the water, and told them to wait where they were till the devil ordered them off. Then hobbling between a couple of midshipmen whom he had brought in the barge with him as a pair of living crutches, he repaired to the admiral's office. His reception there was cold in the extreme. The admiral had no charge to bring against the Commodore, yet he would very willingly grant him a court of inquiry on any point on which the Commodore himself might feel sore. This was to Sir Octavius wormwood and bitter alocs. He proudly declined his superior officer's offer with

little thanks and a grim smile, and quite crest-fallen, repaired to the principal hotel.

“ Yes I, even I, am superseded. Would it not be a wise action incontinently to go hang myself? Supersede me ! Is it possible ? ” He had no sooner uttered these words, as he sank a martyr to physical and mental pain on the sofa, than a clerk entered with a cuttingly civil letter from the admiral, intimating to the Commodore, that, as under all the circumstances, it might be unpleasant to his feelings again to go on board the *Terrific*, the more especially as his successor had already joined, the admiral had taken upon himself to order all the Commodore’s effects to be carefully landed and forwarded to him to his hotel.

At the reception of this insult, the old Commodore’s first impulse was to call the admiral out ; but rightly judging, after a few minutes’ reflection, that he was acting under instructions, he deliberately tore the letter into small pieces before the messenger’s face, and

burned them, telling him coolly, that he “might go from whence he came, as he had no answer to give the admiral.” He then dismissed his midshipmen, ordering them to request the commanding officer to send his servants ashore, with the exception of his steward, who was to remain to superintend the disembarkation of his effects. He was then left to the solitude of an inn, and, with much more leisure than inclination, to think upon his nephew, his daughter, and his sister ; and fully to comprehend how much misery to himself and to others he had created by the indulgence of his evil passions.

The Commodore was not the person long to remain either passive or inactive. He said that he would give that day and the following night to repose. He did so. But this repose was, to him, the most active of all tortures. Notwithstanding the advice of a physician that he had called in, and that of his own naval surgeon, the next morning, he ordered a chaise and four, and proceeded to London, not to

repair the evil of his contemptuous dismissal from command, for that he knew was irreparable, but to endeavour to trace out the influence which had brought it about.

CHAPTER IX.

Clown. Wast ever at court, shepherd?

Corin. No, truly.

Clown. Then thou art damned.

Corin. Nay. I hope—

Clown. Truly, thou art damned, like an ill-roasted egg, all on side.

Corin. For not being at court? Your reason.

Clown. Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never saw'st good manners; if thou never saw'st good manners, then thy manners must be wicked, and wickedness is sin, and sin is damnation: thou art in a parlous state, shepherd.

SHAKSPEARE.

Now I, the chronicler of the passages in the life of the old Commodore, am, as I have before told my very good friend the reader, an ancient, a very ancient mariner; a little prosy or so,

and must have my own method of telling my story, or, peradventure, I may not be able to tell it at all. There is always a sad confusion in my head about dates. That, I suppose, arises from my being placed so quietly on the shelf. The torpidity of so safe and quiet a situation naturally extends to the mind, and years slip by me now, with not so much upon them to record them in my memory as weeks used to have. Now I cannot, for the life of me—and that cannot now be much—tell exactly in what year Sir Octavius came post up to London. I only know very well that it was in the self-same year, or, perhaps, one year or a year and a-half after, I had made acquaintance with one of the King's pages. At that time, I thought that I had served as a lieutenant quite long enough, and having a very natural—perhaps, a laudable though uncommon desire to be made a commander, after reading a particular portion of *Gil Blas de Santillane* ten times over, and being then unemployed, I came up to London,

in order to make my fortune, if not at Court, at least through it.

Is it necessary, before I commence this delicate subject, to make a profession of a loyalty that has been the light of my path and a solace to my heart, ever since I could distinguish the one, and felt the other throb to the first generous sentiment. One little exception, one little pause in this generous current of feeling, I certainly had. That peccadillo I have forgiven myself; all the world ought, therefore, to be satisfied.

Instead of repeating my loyal sentiments, before I touch lightly on the personal character of the third George, let me put in my humble conviction and attestation of his great private virtues, and still greater, though often disputed, public worth. In all the qualities that adorn and dignify the individual, Envy herself, though spurred on by a detestable faction, could never deny that he was not pre-eminent. That some events of his long and paternal reign were disastrous—that much treasure was expended, much

blood wasted—that the empire was dismembered by the loss of the American colonies, and an imperishable debt accumulated on posterity—is as true as it is lamentable. All these were the creation of uncontrollable events. The King had no hand in them, but to temper their severity to the nation, and meliorate their effects to mankind. George the Third was just such a monarch as the spirit of the times, as regarded England's future prosperity, demanded. Had he been more yielding to the outcries of the mad democracy, whose evil genius was ravaging Europe, the constitution would have given way to the encroaching rottenness of sedition, implied in a thousand ways, and, though seldom openly acted upon, at all times—and at no time more than that—energetically, though silently, at work.

Had he been a stern sovereign, and attempted to put down the then too prevalent levelling principle with a stronger hand, either of laws enacted on the occasion or by military force, a

crisis of blood would have ensued ; a civil and a servile war would have ravaged the land, and England would have run the demoralising and sanguinary race of republicanism with regicide France.

No greater sign of a special Providence interfering for the safety of England could, to my poor understanding, have been shown, than that of permitting to us the blessing of his long and virtuous reign. Had the majority of his subjects but a tithe of his noble and good qualities, reform had not now been needed, and the empire would have been as great through the action of a long prosperity, as it proved itself only by passing through much misery and adversity. However glorious he made his temporal crown by the splendour of his virtues, if there be any assurance in reason and any truth in religion, he will inherit one that is eternal, where the factious shall not trouble, and the cry of misery, not to be relieved, shall never be heard.

Let me not, then, feeling and believing all

this, be accused of irreverence towards his memory, if, in the playfulness of my tale, I may, whilst I do honour to his goodness, allude to some of his peculiarities. His character has now become history; it is the property of any writer who may wish to make use of it, but a property that should ever be handled with delicacy, and treated with that deference that the great may think that they have the right to command, but which the good only can ensure.

To resume. I came to court. I took this measure from the most amiable of motives. In the first place, I had no interest, excepting long services and very disabling wounds. In the next place, I did not any longer like to keep watch at night, inasmuch as the wound, made by the musket-ball that passed through my lungs in Howe's affair of '94, always brought on an inflammation when I was exposed to the damp airs of the night. It was not for the vain distinction of being called Captain, or for the sordid advantages of two or three shillings a

day more pay, but merely to prevent myself catching dangerous colds, that I sought this, my next step of promotion. It is plain nothing could be more disinterested. All these considerations weighing upon my mind, I came up to London, and, after much assiduity, I was at length so happy as to be introduced to a little old man, one of the oddest affairs possible for the office, but who was yet actually a page to his most gracious Majesty.

The little old man liked me, and I liked the little old man, so I followed the Court from St. James's to Windsor, and from Windsor to Weymouth, and from Weymouth again to St. James's.

My old friend did not do me much good. He told me that the great lords and ladies were always begging about the persons of their Majesties; and that they begged so loudly, and so continuously, that he was really ashamed to beg at all: but that, when he found a favourable opportunity, he would mention my request, as

soon as he possibly could. At length, I was in the ecstasies of a third heaven ; I attracted the monarchical notice. It was on a blessed Tuesday, of all the days of the week ; it was in the Green Park, of all the places of the world. As his benevolent Majesty passed me, I uncovered, and made him a low and reverential bow. His Majesty looked at me—his Majesty spoke. Turning to a great lord, with a broad blue sash across the shoulder, he said to him, respecting me—the identical individual myself—his Majesty George the Third verily said these words :

“Bad—bad—bad—very bad cough. A pale—a pale thin young man. Often see him—bad, bad, bad cough—must take drops, drops, drops.”

But by this time his Majesty had dropped me so far a-stern, that what particular drops they were that I was to take never dropped into my ears. Think of that—to be prescribed for by the most puissant potentate in the world !

I concluded that my fortune was made. I sought and found my old friend the page. I shook him by the hand for one quarter of an hour, without intermission, and afterwards felt much hurt that he was not so sanguine as myself. But the honour had been done me; fate could not deprive me of THAT.

Don't think, reader, that I am growing garrulous upon myself, without regard to the progress of my story; you will find that my personal adventures at Court really had something to do with the old Commodore.

Well, after this most happy occurrence, I crossed the king's path more and more. It was all the same whether his Majesty was at Windsor, or Weymouth, or Kensington, or Hampton Court, or Kew, there I was also, coughing louder and bowing lower than ever. At length, a flippant, coxcombical prig of a shore-going lubber of a lord in waiting—I shall never like a lord in waiting again—stepped up to me one day in St. James's Park, after the royal party

had passed on, and told me that it was his Majesty's request that I no more haunted his royal path ; and that if I did, he should hand me over to the constables.

Here was a blow indeed. I had a great mind to have kicked the lord in waiting, almost in the royal presence, but as he did not wait until I had made up my mind, he left me waiting where I stood. I might have exclaimed with Wolsey—I wish I had now ; it would then have been some relief to me—

“ Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness !

This is the state of man ; To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him ;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.”

But I did not. I went home to my lodging in horrible spirits, with my detestable cough worse than ever. For three days I bemoaned over

my blighted hopes. I began to think that Wilks and the Opposition were not altogether devils incarnate ; and that there might be some virtue in Charles James Fox. I began to reason upon my infirmity : “ If kings,” said I to myself, “ dislike chronic coughs, they should not go to war, and thus get their subjects shot through the lungs.” Alas ! I was fast expectorating my loyalty from my lungs.

At length, my little old page called upon me. He found me ungartered, with ravelled hose and shoeless feet, *almost a rebel*.

“ His Majesty has asked about you.”

“ And what did he say ?” said I, moodily.

“ He asked me the name of the pale gentleman who coughed so much.”

“ Well ?” said I, brightening up.

“ I told him ; and your profession.”

“ Did you say nothing to him about my suit at court ?”

“ The opportunity was not a good one. But five minutes before, Lord Pleadwell had been

asking for the promise of the next vacancy of a commander for his younger son."

"And got it, of course! To be sure, the young honourable is a better subject than I; he has not been hacked to pieces by wounds, or got a ball through his lungs, nor ever will. I believe he is not yet twenty; I know that he never saw a shot fired in anger in his life. The King is right to give him this promotion; there is much more service in him than I."

"But the King has not given it to him as yet."

"Yet! True; but what further said his Majesty about so maimed and humble an individual as myself?"

"That with your *vevations*—his Majesty was a minute in being delivered of that word—and obstinate cough, you should take care of yourself."

"And was that all?"

"All."

"And much good that will do me."

“Got for dam ! Mein goot vriend !” said the page, for the little old page was a German. “Dis not one everybodies that can vrag de King aske about his dritty cough ?”

No sooner had the page gone, than I bought me, at the next chandler’s shop, a whole half-quire of foolscap, and commenced a pamphlet in these words :

“The vices of a monarchical government are manifold and manifest. As the earth cannot bear two suns, neither can this kingdom bear two majesties : therefore the majesty of the people and the majesty of the monarch are incompatible ; and shall the majesty of the many succumb to the majesty of an individual ?”

When I had written thus far, I was seized with so strong an attack of coughing and of conscience, that I was forced to lay by my pen, never again to resume it as a political pamphleteer.

The next day my friend Sturnzer called, all smirks and smiles. “His Majesty has sent you this box of lozenges, and this note, written with

his royal hand, to the First Lord of the Admiralty, which you must deliver in person."

I showed the German out of my room, with the deference due to an emperor, dressed myself in my best uniform, waited immediately upon the First Lord, and found myself a commander on the following Saturday.

I think that I am the first naval officer who ever coughed himself into a commission.

On the next drawing-room, I went to court with the largest bullion epaulet on my left shoulder that London could furnish. I was most graciously received.

"Captain Drib—ib—bibble," said his most sacred Majesty, "how, how, how is your cough? Took the lozenges—eh? eh? eh? Other prescription too—did good? Ah! I see, I see—shot through the lungs that first of June—severely wounded with Jervis—know all, know all—lay by, lay by—get well, get well—kings good doctors. Pretty, very, very pretty, Lady Georgy!"

So, as I concluded that this last sentence could not, by any stretch of vanity, be addressed to me, I *coughed* out my gratitude, and passed on. They put me on the shelf then, like an old edition of sermons; but, as they gilded me pretty well at the time, I shall not complain. They might have done better, as I have said before, the more especially as my cough got well, and I am now a hale old fellow of fourscore and upwards.

Now it was most necessary to tell my readers thus much of myself, in order that they may be assured that I had some channel by which I obtained news of what passed at court.

I had just kissed hands upon the receiving of my commission, when Sir Octavius Bacuissart came tearing up to town. His four jaded horses and his mud-covered chaise standing at the door of the Admiralty, caused a great sensation at the west-end, and a still greater in the city. For half-an-hour consols fell one-and-a-half per cent., as it was believed that the Austrians had

received a severe check; but when it was known on 'Change that a naval commander in full uniform had alighted from the vehicle, the funds took an upward direction, and rose two per cent.: there had been some great naval victory. What a fuss the coming to town of the angry poor old Commodore made, only to know why he was superseded!

The First Lord and two of the juniors were making a Board. The wooden heads of the Admiralty can always make something when they are laid together. A board is certainly something. The old Commodore had an audience granted him immediately: he had, however, much difficulty in obtaining it; for two porters could hardly heave the heavy and fighting old *podagre* up the stone steps.

The meeting was very cool and civil on the part of their Lordships, very irascible and imprudent on the part of the Baronet. The only answer that he could get was, that it was no longer for the best interests of his Majesty's

naval service that Sir Octavius should be longer continued in command. No charge was brought, or intended to be brought against him. He might retire: there was no other answer. Indeed, all further communications with the Board had better be made through the usual channel, by letter of service, directed to the secretary.

“Then I will have a personal interview with his Majesty.”

The First Lord thought that rather improbable, as he knew that there was a disinclination in that exalted quarter to seeing the Commodore. Indeed, he knew that the Lord Chamberlain had orders to intimate to the Commodore, that his attendance, either at the levees or the drawing-rooms, could be dispensed with.

“Indeed!” roared out the Commodore. “And has it come to this? Then, my lord, I will exert my hereditary privilege, and see their Majesties in a manner not very agreeable to them. By the vigour of saltpetre will I, my lord!”

“Then it is true!” muttered one of the junior lords, who was taking lessons in the art of government in this, so-called, school for statesmen; and, in two minutes afterwards, he was in his chariot, going, with all speed, to St. James’s palace.

The First Lord smiled incredulously; and the mortified old Commodore retired from his audience in a worse humour, if possible, than before.

The nature of this menace will be afterwards explained. Whether this threat that Sir Octavius had imprudently made a year before, and which had been just carried by some sycophant to the royal ear, or that which took place, as will be described in the ensuing chapter, brought about the Commodore’s dismissal from his command, the reader must himself determine. Perhaps he will say that both of these things had an equal operation in working out the downfall of the veteran hero.

CHAPTER X.

“ The love o’ th’ widow for her only son
Of all affections ever is the strongest,
Most violent, most unresistable ;
Since ’tis, indeed, her latest harvest-home,
Last merriment ’fore winter.”

OLD PLAY.

AFTER relating, as I have, my own adventure in the last chapter, no one has a right to feel surprised that I knew all the court-secrets of the time. What with my intimacy with the old German page, who, I observed, was much more friendly and communicative to me after he could call me Captain Dribble, which he always pronounced Dibble, than when I was plain Mister, and my acquaintance with the functionaries of the palace—there are no ser-

vants immediately attendant on majesty—I was pretty well informed of what was going on, and I flatter myself that I knew the royal determination on some of the most momentous points that then agitated Europe, at least a full half-hour before the honourable Mr. William Pitt. I may be deceiving myself, of course, for I am, as I have too often said, very aged, but at the time, or perhaps a little after they happened, I prognosticated events—that's all. But any sensible person knows I could not have done this had I not been familiar with state-secrets, owing to my relations with the palace.

The supercilious and the sceptical may ask, upon what authority do I relate all these events? My answer is as triumphant as that of the minister in the wrong, who is backed by a large majority. I am unfortunate in my similes—but I am too old to mend them. Perhaps my critics may take the trouble to do it for me—they are tinkers and botchers, who, not being able to make a kettle themselves, contrive, in

attempting to mend the faulty kettle of others, sometimes to get into hot water, and always to make two holes where there was only one before. But this is talking (*en parenthèse*) sadly.

To revert. My answer to the supercilious and the sceptical is this. I sailed with the old Commodore myself in the early part of my life, and was intimate with him and his family for many years. I have had the honour of visiting Lady Astell, but I confess that I never could take the liberty of asking *her* any questions. So the reader must take my account of the following scene between their majesties and herself *cum grano salis*,—that is to say, according to the version of those who come in grand with the salt, as they lay out the royal table. I have not forgotten my Latin yet.

The very day after Lady Astell had left Trestletree Hall, clad in the deepest mourning, she came up to London, requested, and immediately obtained, what is called a private audience of the Queen. She fell at her Majesty's

feet, and it was long before she could be induced to rise and make known her wrongs. But when she opened the flood-gates of her feelings, when she poured forth the eloquence of her agonized heart, and told of the exceeding love that she, a widow, bore to her only gallant child, the Queen, who had then a noble son embarked in the same profession, wept with her. Then followed the impassioned details of the boy's persecutions, of his proud spirit taking refuge from the ignominy of the lash in the dismal and soul-endangering abyss of suicide. When the now almost frantic mother described the plunge, and dash, and the closing of the dark waters over the head of her child, the good Queen shuddered, and said, "Can such things be?" and when the mother was about to proceed, she gently said to her, "Forbear—the King must hear this also," and retired.

In a short space, Lady Astell was sent for into the King's private closet, and there repeated to his Majesty, the Queen being present, her

sad story, and wound up the whole by showing and reading to them the last letter of Augustus. When the soul is filled with the sublimest emotions, that is but a mean writer who would stoop to lessen the effect of their expression by describing peculiarities of speech or action.

His Majesty sat by the side of the widow, so recently and so dreadfully made childless, took her hand with all the affection of an old friend, and tried with an honourable warmth every topic of consolation on one who would not be comforted. He told Lady Astell that he heartily wished that the service was rid of the barbarity of flogging altogether, and more especially of flogging the young gentlemen—that she must remember that it always had been the practice of the navy, and that the dishonour and the disgrace was not on the flogged, but on him who wrongfully ordered the humiliating chastisement. He told her he pitied her from his soul, and asked her, in conclusion, what he could do for her?

“ O good, gracious, and most benevolent king !” was her answer, “ is this wild, angry, bad man a fitting person to have command over your best and bravest subjects—to torture and to drown them ?”

This was touching a delicate point. A better sailor and a more able naval commander the country did not possess. The King knew this, and also remembered his long services, and thought of the old Commodore’s mutilated person and scarred body. Moreover, in the state of discipline of the navy, and in the opinion of the time, it was only harsh and determined characters like that of Sir Octavius that could curb and rule the boisterous spirits of the day. His Majesty also reflected that, had Augustus been a grovelling and common character, he would have taken his flogging as thousands had done before him ; and after a due portion of abuse, gone again to his duty, and in his turn have hereafter flogged others. After all, the Commodore had only used an un-

doubted and generally practised privilege.—There was no quarrel between him and the service,—indeed, as men then reasoned and spoke, no offence; though there might be a most deadly one between the brother and the sister.

“My dear Lady Astell,” said his Majesty, most tenderly, “you cannot, for a moment, believe that Sir Octavius wished to make his nephew commit suicide?”

“May it please your Majesty, the blood of Augustus, through both his father and his mother, is of the noblest of the land; he would not have been Sir Octavius’ nephew, nor Lord Astell’s son, if he had not sooner suffered death than dishonour.”

As just then neither the service nor the King could spare the Commodore, his Majesty was loth to promise that he should be dismissed from his command, which was the first act of retribution that Lady Astell contemplated. Honours were offered her; the title that would have been her son’s for life—even a court of

inquiry upon her brother's conduct. All these she rejected; the last especially. She would not, implacable as was now her hate to her brother, have the family dishonoured.

Everything was done to allay her irritation, and soothe her harrowed feelings, but the only one thing she sought was the Commodore's dismissal. At sea, she knew that her victim would be out of her reach, and that the hurry and excitement of naval warfare would give no leisure for remorse to work upon his bosom. She wanted him on shore, a prey to lassitude, with nothing to do but to think : she could not rest until she had fulfilled her son's dying injunctions.

She took her leave of their Majesties, fully impressed with the excellence of their hearts, but with her own but little relieved. Indeed, a sort of half-promise was implied, that her brother's command should be given to another, if any other could be found who could so well supply his place ; or if, upon inquiry, anything

really and substantially militating against the rules of the service could be proved against him. She returned to her desolate home, brooding over her bereavement, and meditating plans of vengeance.

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